

INDIANAPOLIS WOMEN WORKING FOR THE RIGHT TO VOTE:
THE FORGOTTEN DRAMA OF 1917

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Introduction

In the fall of 1917, between 30,000 and 40,000 Indianapolis women registered to vote.¹ The passage of the Maston-McKinley Partial Suffrage Act earlier that year granted women suffrage in municipal elections, school elections, and special elections, including referenda on prohibition and electing delegates to the proposed constitutional convention in 1917. While the bill did not grant women the right to vote in presidential or state elections, partial suffrage gave them a significantly amplified voice in the public realm. Newspaper coverage described celebrations in Indianapolis attended by both men and women. The joyous reaction of some Hoosiers, and subsequent efforts to educate all Indiana women about voting, demonstrate that many state residents welcomed woman's suffrage.² But not everyone in Indiana was ready for women to claim this right of citizenship.

Henry W. Bennett filed a lawsuit against the constitutional convention law passed in 1917 because of the high cost associated with holding a constitutional convention.³ He also complained about the constitutionality of the partial suffrage law, because that law allowed women to cast ballots for delegates to attend a constitutional convention. The Marion County Superior Court ruled in favor of the constitutionality of the constitutional

¹ The numbers of women who registered to vote are not exact as the registration forms have been destroyed and the newspapers did not print the exact number. "Expects Registration of 100,000 to 110,000," *Indianapolis News*, September 28, 1917; "117,501 Can Vote in City Election," *Indianapolis Star*, October 23, 1917.

² In this thesis I use the term woman's suffrage. Historians have used both "woman's suffrage" and "women's suffrage" to describe the suffrage movement. Hoosiers used the term "woman's suffrage" in 1917 to describe the passage of the bills and court cases. I will use the term "conservative" to refer to a group of women who were for suffrage based on women's perceived moral superiority to men, therefore differing from anti-suffragists who did not want women to vote, but also different from women who wanted suffrage awarded to women because of a belief in the equality between the sexes. See Barbara A. Springer, "Ladylike Reformers: Indiana Women and Progressive Reform, 1900-1920" (Ph.D. diss., Indiana University, 1985).

³ Bennett was an Indianapolis businessman and president of the Indianapolis Stove Company. *Men of Indiana in Nineteen Hundred and One* (Indianapolis: The Benesch Publishing Company, 1901), 115.

convention law, but against the partial suffrage law. Bennett appealed, and the Indiana Supreme Court took up the case. The Indiana Supreme Court decided the proposed convention violated Indiana's Constitution but refused to rule on the partial suffrage law, leaving the partial suffrage law intact.⁴ This indecision spurred William Knight, an Indianapolis lumber company owner, to quickly file a lawsuit claiming the Indiana General Assembly did not have the right to extend the voter base through these means.⁵ He argued taxpayers should not have to shoulder the burden of the costs of increased personnel at the polls and the separate ballot boxes for women as required by the suffrage law. The trial court ruled in favor of Knight and was affirmed on appeal. This meant the women of Indiana lost their limited rights in the voting booth when the Indiana Supreme Court ruled the partial suffrage law violated Article II, Section 2 of the Indiana Constitution.⁶

These events are significant in Indiana's history as voters were disenfranchised and a legal precedent was set. This precedent played a role most recently in the 2010 Indiana Supreme Court case of *League of Women Voters, et al. v. Todd Rokita*.⁷ This case challenged the state's new voter identification law. In their opening brief before the Court of Appeals, the League of Women Voters cited the Supreme Court's ruling in *Knight* for the proposition that the legislature did not have the right to change voter qualifications,

⁴ *Bennett v. Jackson*, 186 Ind. 533, 116 N.E. 921 (Ind. 1917).

⁵ William W. Knight was born in Philadelphia on May 8, 1862. He began working in the lumber trade while he was still a boy. In 1888, he came to Indianapolis and began working for Henry C. Long. In 1898, the two organized the Long-Knight Lumber Company, which was incorporated for \$20,000. Knight served as the president and treasurer. Long seemingly provided the funds for this venture. He died in 1902. The company dissolved in 1920. Jacob Piatt Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis: The History, the Industries, the Institutions, and the People of a City of Homes* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co, 1910), 1044; Bureau of the Census, *1910 Census of Population and Housing: Indiana*, Washington, D.C.: Bureau of the Census; Long-Knight Lumber Co. Papers, Corporate Records, Indiana State Archives, Commission on Public Records, Indianapolis.

⁶ *Board of Election Commissioners of the City of Indianapolis v. Knight*, 187 Ind. 108, 117 N.E. 565 (Ind. 1917).

⁷ *League of Women Voters, et al. v. Todd Rokita*, 929 N.E.2d 758 (Ind. 2010).

arguing that “[w]hen the Constitution defines the qualifications of voters such qualifications cannot be changed nor added to by statute.”⁸ Although the League of Women Voters lost this suit, the precedent set by the *Knight* case still proved relevant ninety-three years later.

This thesis will argue that in 1917 a group of ideologically conservative suffragists fought for women’s enfranchisement. Hoosier suffragists argued that women reformers needed access to the voting booth to enact their reforms. As women stepped out into the public sphere and began exerting their influence in the nineteenth century, they used the argument that women’s inherent differences from men made women essential to the creation of a stable society. Women fought for legislation that would improve poor working and living conditions and argued that this fight for change was an extension of the work they did within their homes. Their efforts increasingly brought women into the political arena. Suffragists demonstrated that women could handle the responsibility of voting and, in some cases, even made the argument that women’s moral superiority would clean up the electoral process in the United States.

This thesis will also investigate the impact of anti-suffrage sentiments in Indiana and explore the connections between prohibition and woman’s suffrage. The state’s suffrage leaders actively participated in the Women’s Christian Temperance Union, and the link between the proposed suffrage and prohibition bills in the spring of 1917 appeared explicitly clear in the newspapers of the time. Indiana’s prohibition bill passed in 1917, and the federal amendment prohibiting the production, distribution, sale, and

⁸ Brief of Appellants at 12, *League of Women Voters of Indiana, Inc. v. Rokita*, 915 N.E.2d 151, 155 (Ind. Ct. App. 2009), *vacated*, 929 N.E.2d 758 (Ind. 2010) and *transfer granted, opinion vacated sub nom. League of Women Voters v. Rokita*, 929 N.E.2d 783 (Ind. 2010), http://brennan.3cdn.net/be2c1528c1422af83c_78m6bht6s.pdf (accessed October 26, 2012).

consumption of alcohol passed prior to the national enfranchisement of women. Although women in Indiana did not vote for these measures, their reform efforts helped to push through the passage of prohibition.

Finally, this thesis will also demonstrate how women's service during the early mobilization for World War I positively influenced their bid for enfranchisement. In 1917, women's war work supported their argument that women's public activities gave them the right to enter the political arena. Women's participation in wartime activities was an argument nineteenth-century suffragists relied upon after the Civil War when they sought the right to vote, and it came back into fashion when the country once again enlisted women's help with total mobilization during World War I. Women played an important role in maintaining the home front. They filled jobs left by men who enlisted and heeded the government's call to knit and to conserve food. Suffragists realized that emphasizing their patriotism could garner social capital and support for their agenda.⁹

While these factors played out in the local suffrage movement, it is important to note that national suffrage news also influenced Hoosiers. One particularly influential event was Alice Paul's and the National Women's Party's picket of the White House. This photogenic event dominates popular culture representations of the suffrage movement. However, many Hoosiers, both men and women, believed wartime protests were disrespectful. These unpopular tactics caused Hoosier suffragists to openly

⁹ All three Indianapolis newspapers demonstrate that although the United States entered the war in April 1917, American society was immediately affected and women began to mobilize on the home front. "Anti-Saloon League Offers its Program," *Indianapolis News*, April 16, 1917; "Mrs. Edwards is Chosen President," *Indianapolis News*, April 19, 1917; "Asks Women to Delay Party Affiliation," *Indianapolis News*, May 9, 1917; "Club Folk Called to 'Do Their Bit' in Impeding War," *Indianapolis Star*, April 8, 1917; "Patriotic Duty vs Anti-Suffrage Suits: Enemies of Votes for Women Keep Up the Fight in War Time," *Hoosier Suffragist*, August 22, 1917.

denounce the National Woman's Party.¹⁰ This distancing from radical suffragists came in part because of the conservative nature of Indiana women. Women in Indiana emphasized their need to vote because of the virtues women had that men did not. Paul and the National Woman's Party demanded the vote on the grounds that women were equal to men; this difference of opinions distanced the two suffrage camps.

Although the Indiana story was quickly forgotten and eclipsed by the progress of the Susan B. Anthony Amendment in Washington, D.C., in January 1918, it is still a significant event for a number of reasons. The partial suffrage movement and the slow entrance of women into the political sphere were the reasons women achieved the right to vote in 1920. If women had not taken a direct interest in politics, it is highly unlikely that they would have simply been granted the right to vote. The partial suffrage movement became a trial run for full enfranchisement—men could easily observe that women took the responsibility of voting seriously. Partial suffrage laws from the late-nineteenth century most often gave women the right to vote in school board elections. Since few women utilized that right, many anti-suffragists thought this lack of participation proved that women did not want the vote. When partial suffrage came back into vogue during the 1910s, more women voted and demanded even more rights. Women's war efforts further cemented their roles as citizens in the United States, and they used that work to call for increased participation in the public arena.

Historical literature places the suffrage movement in Indiana within a national context. The events that occurred in Indiana are complex because of the tactics Hoosier women used and the passage of partial suffrage in the midst of World War I. Historical

¹⁰ "Not Connected with White House Picketing," *Indianapolis News*, June 30, 1917.

studies on World War I, law, prohibition, municipal housekeeping, and the suffrage movement all contribute to our understanding of Hoosier suffrage.

One such historical study is Christopher Capozzola's recent monograph, which gives a nuanced analysis of women's war efforts in his research on the changing expectations of American citizenship. His *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* discusses the sacrifices the government asked of its citizens—everything from instituting a draft to calling on women to conserve food and to knit. He explicitly makes the connection between women's war work and the suffrage movement. Capozzola writes that the "culture of obligation" created in a society at war aided suffragists' efforts as they demonstrated "through the fulfillment of obligations that they could be entrusted with rights."¹¹ The larger, more conservative suffrage organizations' dedication to the war effort during their continual campaign for suffrage was evident, not only in Capozzola's study, but also in Indianapolis newspapers in 1917.¹²

Like Capozzola's work, Linda Kerber's monograph does not study Indiana specifically. In *No Constitutional Right to be Ladies*, Kerber investigates the responsibilities and privileges of citizenship that the government denied women by analyzing court cases from the colonial era through the 1980s. The court cases Kerber selected outline the five basic obligations of citizenship: pay taxes, avoid vagrancy, serve

¹¹Christopher Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You: World War I and the Making of the Modern American Citizen* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2008), 103-104.

¹² For other relevant works discussing women's war efforts see: William Breen, *Uncle Sam at Home: Civilian Mobilization, Wartime Federalism, and the Council of National Defense, 1917-1919* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1984); Susan Zeiger, *In Uncle Sam's Service: Women Workers with the American Expeditionary Force, 1917-1919* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999); Susan Zeiger, "She Didn't Raise Her Boy to be a Slacker: Motherhood, Conscription, and the Culture of the First World War," *Feminist Studies* 22, no. 1 (Spring 1996), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3178245> (accessed December 5, 2011): 7-39.

on juries, perform military service, and display loyalty to the country. She postulates that women's relationships to these obligations are different from men's because they derive from women's obligations to their husbands. A man first answered to the state. A woman answered first to her husband, or her father, and then the state; therefore, a woman's relationship with the draft, for instance, is very different from a man's. Ironically, the state and federal government used women's obligations to their husbands to deny them privileges, like voting, but stipulated that women live up to their obligations as citizens by paying taxes. Knight used the grounds that he was hurt as a taxpayer in Indiana, but suffragists quickly pointed out that, they too, paid state taxes. This argument did not sway the court. Kerber argues that the "gendered construction of the American citizen" continued as long as women "owe virtually all their obligation to their husbands."¹³ A number of suffragists used the notion that women were entitled to the vote because it was a basic right of citizenship. Since women paid state taxes, women were citizens. The notion of women's relationship to the government and the notion of citizenship is evident in the legal literature analyzing this period as well.

In *Law, Gender, and Injustice: A Legal History of U.S. Women*, Joan Hoff describes 200 years of women's legal history. Hoff splits the suffrage movement between two periods that she labels, "Constitutional Discrimination" and "Constitutional Protection." These categories coincide with a shift in the suffrage movement as suffragists increasingly turned away from the idea that, based on citizenship, women should be given the vote. Instead, women began to see the ballot as the political tool they needed to improve society. Hoff does not agree with the approach of tying women's

¹³ Linda Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to be Ladies: Women and the Obligations of Citizenship* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1998), 305.

differences to suffrage and protective legislation, as the courts simply used socially-prescribed gender difference to “protect” women.¹⁴ Additionally, Hoff argues that women asked for rights so infrequently that, by the time the laws extending those rights to women were passed, women’s ability to effectively wield their new rights had been diluted. For example, Hoff notes that women asked for the vote when the grass-roots, progressive movement would have made the ballot a very powerful tool in society. However, when women received the vote in 1920 through an Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, the time of relevance had passed as “electoral politics in the United States w[ere] breaking down into increasingly meaningless electoral choices.”¹⁵ This notion that women needed the vote before it became irrelevant is present in the letters of Indiana women. The women’s sense of an immediate need for the ballot was the reason they asked for partial suffrage while continuing to campaign for full suffrage.

How women asked for the right to vote is also important. Suffrage bills were continually placed before state legislatures, and yet they rarely passed. In the essay “Winning Woman Suffrage One Step at a Time: Social Movements and the Logic of the Legislative Process,” Brayden King, Marie Cornwall, and Eric Dahlin postulate that reformers had enough social capital to have bills heard before the legislature. However, social agitation had little effect on legislators’ votes, because legislative action in the early stages of a bill might be “symbolic gestures on the part of legislatures trying to appease a broad based constituency.”¹⁶ This theory might help to explain the long history of the Indiana suffrage movement. Indiana women brought the first of many suffrage

¹⁴ Joan Hoff, *Law, Gender, and Injustice: A Legal History of U.S. Women* (New York: New York University Press, 1991), 193.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

¹⁶ Brayden G. King, Marie Cornwall, and Eric Dahlin, “Winning Woman Suffrage One Step at a Time: Social Movements and the Logic of the Legislative Process,” *Social Forces* 83 no. 3 (2005): 1215.

requests to the General Assembly in 1859. At that point in time, Indiana women asked for the right to vote on the basis of equal rights. However, it was not until 1917 that the Indiana suffrage law passed based upon women's moral superiority, not because of a belief in equality.

In the spring of 1917, Hoosier suffragists seemed positive of the constitutionality of their new partial suffrage rights. According to David Bodenhamer and Randall Shepard, women had good reason to be confident. In the essay, "The Narratives and Counternarratives of Indiana Legal History" Bodenhamer and Shepard write that the courts often "deferred to the legislature and . . . did little to advance new rights or powers under the broad language of the Indiana constitution, except in the area of individual rights."¹⁷ In *Knight*, the Court did the opposite. The Maston-McKinley Suffrage Act extended individual rights, yet the court ruled against the law.

Virginia Dill McCarty specifically analyzes the Indiana courts' treatment of women in the essay "From Petticoat Slavery to Equality: Women's Rights in Indiana Law." Her analysis could provide another answer to the incongruent reaction of the court to the *Knight* decision the stance that Bodenhamer and Shepard identify. McCarty concludes, "*Knight* was the last gasp of the conservative movement in Indiana against the women's vote."¹⁸ The court chose a very strict interpretation of the state constitution and ruled in favor of *Knight* because of anti-suffrage sentiments. Much like Bodenhamer and Shepard, McCarty found that Indiana was on par with the rest of the nation: neither ultra-conservative nor a trendsetting state, it was merely shaped by societal forces. Although

¹⁷ David J. Bodenhamer and Randall T. Shepard, "The Narratives and Counternarratives of Indiana Legal History," *Indiana Magazine of History* 101 no. 4 (December 2005): 360.

¹⁸ Virginia Dill McCarty, "From Petticoat Slavery to Equality," in *The History of Indiana Law*, ed. David J. Bodenhamer and Hon. Randall T. Shepard (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2006): 184. McCarty's use of the word conservative parallels this thesis's definition of anti-suffrage.

women began entering politics through social reforms in the late-nineteenth century, women were still working on gaining a voice in the legislature, and not everyone wanted to listen.

Legislation like protective labor laws and prohibition acts were important issues for women. Women who favored suffrage drove the temperance movement. The increased association between the two movements did not always benefit both movements. Liquor interest groups voiced strong anti-suffrage sentiments. The visible connections between suffrage and prohibition became central to understanding anti-suffrage sentiments. Studies about the moral link between prohibition and suffrage movements have been incorporated into many suffrage texts. Ross Evans Paulson's *Women's Suffrage and Prohibition: A Comparative Study of Equality and Social Control* examines the United States, and compares it to examples from England, Australia, New Zealand, and Scandinavian countries. Throughout these comparisons, Paulson argues that the debates over these two reforms questioned the "meaning of equality and the nature of democracy," especially in America.¹⁹ To Paulson, the prohibition movement started as a personal, moral issue. Eventually, people became aware of the widespread implications of the personal problem of alcoholism and agitated for social reform through a political process. He weighs in on the debate of tactical approaches early in the suffrage movement, by stating it was "stigmatized in the public mind" due to its associations with

¹⁹ Ross Evans Paulson, *Women's Suffrage and Prohibition: A Comparative Study of Equality and Social Control* (Glenview, IL: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1973), 7.

marriage rights and free love radicals.²⁰ In order for both suffrage and prohibition to be successful, proponents needed to win over middle class men and women.²¹

This goal started to become reality in the 1890s with the winning combination of Frances Willard and the Women's Christian Temperance Union's support for the suffrage movement in the United States. In the 1890s, brewers pointedly denounced prohibition and suffrage. Paulson theorizes that the re-emergence of a conservative suffrage movement circa 1890 was due to the increased popularity of the moral argument and the growing association between suffrage and temperance. Historians accepted this theory and more nuanced studies proving this premise appeared.²²

While overviews are useful, the analysis of Hoosier reformers must also be grounded in the context of Indiana's social reforms. Robert G. Barrows documents Indiana's municipal housekeeping reform movement in his biography, *Albion Fellows Bacon: Indiana's Municipal Housekeeper*. While this work analyzes one reformer whose primary concerns were housing and child welfare reform, the work as a whole addresses the broader movement in Indiana. Bacon, like other reformers, used her socially-prescribed feminine qualities in order to promote reforms. Bacon was a conservative suffragist who supported the movement because it would give her a way to support her other reforms. Barrows writes of Bacon's transformation into a suffragist that, "it was less out of a belief in abstract rights than a matter of hard-headed practicality . . . a means

²⁰ Ibid., 91.

²¹ Occasionally in this thesis I will refer to class. When in the context of referring to a specific work, I rely upon that writer's definition. Otherwise, I classify class according to Barbara Springer's discussion in her dissertation of Indiana reformers. Springer, "Ladylike Reformers: Indiana Women and Progressive Reform, 1900-1920," 3-4.

²² For more information on the intersection of suffrage and the temperance movement see: Richard F. Hamm, *Shaping the Eighteenth Amendment: Temperance Reform, Legal Culture, and the Polity, 1880-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995); Carolyn De Swarte Gifford, "Frances Willard and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union's Conversion to Woman Suffrage," in *One Woman, One Vote*, ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (Troutdale, OR: NewSage Press, 1995), 117-134.

rather than an end.”²³ This biographical approach to Progressive Era reform movements, municipal housekeeping, and suffrage ties in well with the study of the 1917 suffrage drama.²⁴ While Bacon was not the most active member of the state’s suffrage organizations, she was a correspondent and friend of Luella McWhirter, the president of the Legislative Council of Indiana Women.

Barbara Springer’s 1985 dissertation, “Ladylike Reformers: Indiana Women and Progressive Reform, 1900-1920” reflects on the broader movement in Indiana. She notes the efforts of numerous women and theorizes about the broader trends of Hoosiers’ efforts to obtain the vote. She concludes that women used “ladylike” tactics to fight for their rights because of concerns they had as mothers about the state of the nation. Springer considers the reformers’ impact on the progressive era and effectiveness of getting social reforms passed even without the vote. These reforms fit with the socially-prescribed concerns of women, including housing reform, protective labor reform, temperance, and suffrage. While the women were not very successful in passing reforms and ended up cementing domestic stereotypes, they successfully expanded their sphere of influence. This effort was not as radical as it had been in previous years because, as Springer argues, “they made such agitation acceptable, in part because of their professed

²³ Robert G. Barrows, *Albion Fellows Bacon: Indiana’s Municipal Housekeeper* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2000), 170.

²⁴ For a national overview of the association between clubwomen and political reform see: Dorothy Schneider and Carl J. Schneider, *American Women in the Progressive Era, 1900-1920* (New York: Facts on File, 1993); Daphne Spain, *How Women Saved the City* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2001); Victoria Bissell Brown, “Jane Addams, Progressivism, and Woman Suffrage: An Introduction to ‘Why Women Should Vote,’” in *One Woman, One Vote*, ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (Troutdale, OR: NewSage Press, 1995), 179-195; Rebecca Edwards, *Angels in the Machinery* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997); Jean V. Matthews, *The Rise of the New Woman* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 2003).

‘ladylike’ behavior.”²⁵ This notion of ladylike behavior is visible in Albion Fellows Bacon’s support for suffrage.²⁶

Scores of historians have undertaken projects analyzing the woman’s suffrage movement. Eleanor Flexner was the first historian to study the movement. Her *Century of Struggle: The Women’s Rights Movement in the United States* (1959), examines the status of American women from the colonial era through the ratification of the Nineteenth Amendment. In a later edition of her work, Flexner regretted her expansive time frame and wished she had restricted the study to the period of the true suffrage movement. Although her work did not focus solely on 1848 to 1920, her narrative has become the cornerstone of suffrage studies.²⁷ Another classic monograph is Aileen Kraditor’s *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920*. This 1965 work defines the splits within the suffrage movement. The focus on the philosophical underpinnings of suffrage allows for insights into the ideologically diverse movement and whether suffrage was argued for on the basis of women’s moral superiority or women’s equality to men.²⁸

While landmark suffrage texts are useful to read and provide context of the larger national movement, they do not analyze the partial suffrage movement in much depth.²⁹

²⁵ Springer, “Ladylike Reformers: Indiana Women and Progressive Reform, 1900-1920,” 250.

²⁶ For additional information on the suffrage movement in Indiana see: Alene Sloan, “Some Aspects of the Woman Suffrage Movement in Indiana,” (Ph.D. diss, Ball State University, 1982); Lindsay E. Rump, “Votes for Women: Women’s Suffrage, Gendered Political Culture, and Progressive Era Masculinity in the State of Indiana,” (Undergrad. paper, Butler University, 2010); W. Bruce Laetsch, “Editorial Reaction to Woman Suffrage as Taken from Selected Hoosier Newspapers” (Master’s thesis, Butler University, 1960); Nathan Gallagher, “‘The Coming Storm’: Women’s Suffrage in Indiana 1851-1881,” Mary F. Crisler Scholarship Project, IUPUI, 2011.

²⁷ Eleanor Flexner, *Century of Struggle: The Women’s Rights Movement in the United States*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1996), xxxii.

²⁸ Aileen Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement, 1890-1920* (1965; repr., New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1981).

²⁹ For a survey of suffrage texts that are relevant but do not analyze the midwestern suffrage movement in depth: Jean H. Baker, *Sisters: The Lives of America’s Suffragists* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2005); Ellen Carol DuBois, *Feminism & Suffrage* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978); Sara Hunter Graham, *Woman Suffrage and the New Democracy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press 1996); Linda G Ford,

Steven Buechler's 1986 study, *The Transformation of the Woman Suffrage Movement: The Case of Illinois, 1850-1920*, is an exception to the rule. Buechler uses the Illinois suffrage movement as a case study in order to analyze the changes in political movements. He argues that while the aim of the suffrage movement never changed, the tactics, rationale, and reasoning did. Buechler pinpoints the catalyst for change in the suffrage movement. He suggests that the expediency argument, which centered on women's supposed moral superiority and their need for suffrage to clean up the political realm, demonstrated an ideological shift in the movement. This shift in the women's tactics brought in a strong contingent of reformers who de-radicalized a large segment of the suffrage movement. They instituted plans to ask for partial suffrage in order to get a voice and stopped touting women's equality and this led to success.³⁰ The increasing urbanization of society strongly linked the home and the municipality. As more men began leaving the home for work, women accepted traditional sex roles and capitalized on social expectations in order to push for the vote. Buechler espouses the idea that in order to "properly execute their domestic duties . . . women required municipal suffrage so they could exert control over sanitation, food inspection, waste removal, and the like."³¹ When the suffrage movement largely abandoned the argument that women should be able to vote because they were inherently equal to men, they also began to exclude

"Alice Paul and the Triumph of Militancy," in *One Woman, One Vote*, ed. Marjorie Spruill Wheeler (Troutdale, OR: NewSage Press, 1995), 277-294. Texts that discuss the gradual entrance of women into the political sphere include: Holly McCammon, "'Out of the Parlors and into the Streets': The Changing Tactical Repertoire of the U.S. Women's Suffrage Movements," *Social Forces* 81, no. 3 (March 2003), <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3598176> (accessed December 5, 2001): 787-818; Jo Freeman, *A Room at a Time: How Women Entered Party Politics* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000); Robert Dinkin, *Before Equal Suffrage: Women in Partisan Politics from Colonial Times to 1920* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1995).

³⁰ Steven M. Buechler, *The Transformation of the Woman Suffrage Movement: The Case of Illinois, 1850-1920* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1986), 33.

³¹ *Ibid.*, 43.

many of the marginalized classes. The new end goal was to preserve the current social hierarchy and simply to allow mothers to care for their children both inside and outside the home.³²

Illinois' propinquity to Indiana makes Buechler's study valuable for several reasons. Indiana suffragists referred to Illinois because its' 1913 partial suffrage law was upheld in court. Kraditor's one mention of the partial suffrage movement noted that she believed it hindered full suffrage. However, she also wrote that Illinois's move to partially enfranchise women served as a turning point in the movement and a game changer in the East.³³ Unfortunately, she did not further analyze this point.

The suffrage movement in Indiana in 1917 did not occur in a vacuum. The study of the legislation and court cases demonstrate the complex forces at work. The emerging wartime society greatly influenced women's bid for suffrage. Moreover, the question of what exactly were women's rights as citizens became especially important when the government started to make demands on these women's daily lives. By 1918, even conservative women began to ask for the vote in order to pass social reforms. This influence caused the movement to take on the moral aspect of asking for the vote because of women's supposed inherently feminine qualities and as a tool to improve society. The Progressive Era also led to the increasing importance of enfranchisement because of the grassroots nature of progressive reforms. Suffrage movement literature is constantly reassessing the importance of the radical and conservative women. This historical debate is important as conservative Hoosier suffragists were the most vocal during the passage of the Maston-McKinley Bill and the two court cases that limited and then rescinded

³² Ibid., 44.

³³ Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement*, 6.

women's right to vote. My thesis will join the growing body of works like Barrows' or Buechler's books in providing a localized example of reformers and conservative suffragists in the Midwest. The conservative suffragists in Indianapolis effectively won public support even if they did not ultimately obtain the vote in 1917.

Chapter 1: 1917 Legislative Session

In the fall of 1916, the Republican candidates running for public office in Indiana fared well. Governor Samuel Ralston, a Democrat, was not seeking re-election. A Democrat had served as the governor of Indiana since Thomas R. Marshall succeeded Republican James Franklin Hanly in 1909. The 1916 election was a particularly close one as Republican James P. Goodrich defeated his Democratic opponent, John A.M. Adair, by 12,771 votes in an election in which 686,359 men cast ballots.³⁴ Given the close margin of victory, newspapers anticipated problems at polling stations; however, the three Indianapolis newspapers reported only minor clashes and a few allegations of corruption. Goodrich had funded his own bid for governor by providing his campaign manager with \$40,000.³⁵ Democrats had raised campaign funds through donations which allowed Republicans to accuse them of incurring debts that would have to be paid back. Machine politics increasingly fell under attack, and the Republican charge that the “Democratic machine was working in splendid order . . . [and] that ‘oil’ was being used liberally to keep the machine in good running order” hurt Adair.³⁶ In the end, the gubernatorial, house, and senate races all favored Republicans. Therefore, the next legislative docket would be important as few roadblocks would impede the Republican agenda. Conservative, reform-minded women took advantage of this fortuitous political situation.

The Legislative Council of Indiana Women wasted no time in advertising the bills they wanted to see passed by the 1917 legislature. The Legislative Council, composed of

³⁴ Dane Starbuck, “James P. Goodrich,” in *The Governors of Indiana*, ed. Linda C. Gugin and James E. St. Clair (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 2006), 252.

³⁵ Ibid.

³⁶ “Vote In Indiana Passes Quietly,” *Indianapolis Star*, November 8, 1916.

women's clubs from across the state, lobbied for Hoosier women's interests. The Legislative Council was formed in 1914 under the direction of Grace Julian Clarke, daughter of prominent Indiana politician, George W. Julian. The Legislative Council acted in a nonpartisan and democratic fashion, but it navigated within a bi-partisan world. The clubs belonging to the Legislative Council asked their members to vote on which issues should be supported by the Legislative Council. As many as 80,000 Hoosier women voiced their opinions to determine which issues the Legislative Council should lobby for in any given year.³⁷ President of the Legislative Council, Luella McWhirter, noted there were 50,000 women represented in the 1916 requests.³⁸ Every women's club in the state could be associated with the Legislative Council if it wished; each club could send one delegate to the annual meeting.³⁹ The organizational bylaws required that in order for the Legislative Council to lobby for a measure, two-thirds of the women's votes had to endorse the proposed measure. Once a measure was approved, a steering committee would be appointed to guide the lobbying effort for that reform.⁴⁰

Luella McWhirter penned a letter to the Indiana Republican Party to lobby for various bills including partial suffrage, a constitutional convention, prohibition, protective labor legislation for women, and a full suffrage amendment.⁴¹ The Legislative Council was not the only organization actively campaigning for woman's suffrage. In mid-November 1916, the nationally-recognized prohibition advocate and renowned lecturer, William Jennings Bryan, spoke before the Women's Christian Temperance

³⁷ Springer, "Ladylike Reformers: Indiana Women and Progressive Reform, 1900-1920," 142-143.

³⁸ "To the Members of the Legislative Council," Luella McWhirter Papers, Box 6, Folder 9, Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.

³⁹ If there were more than twenty-five branches of an organization, they received an extra delegate.

⁴⁰ Springer, "Ladylike Reformers: Indiana Women and Progressive Reform, 1900-1920," 142.

⁴¹ "Legislative Council of Indiana Women," Luella McWhirter Papers, Box 6, Folder 9, Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.

Union (WCTU) at the Murat Theater in downtown Indianapolis. Bryan was not supposed to address the WTCU members that evening, but declared upon his introduction that he wanted to speak about suffrage. Bryan said that he promoted state amendments and a national amendment granting suffrage. He believed that the women's vote could be instrumental to the control of liquor in the nation; therefore, women should obtain the vote quickly and through any viable routes. He elaborated on the subject by stating, "[w]omen need the ballot, but to an even greater extent is woman's conscience needed in the politics of the nation."⁴² These local events reflected the sentiments of national prohibition and temperance leaders.

Frances Willard, a prominent national temperance leader, promoted the widening of the acceptable sphere of women's work in the 1880s. Willard became the president of the WCTU in 1879 and spent the subsequent nineteen years leading the organization. She promoted the notion that women could be and should be active political players. Willard advocated for the vote under the slogan "home protection," a message that she claimed God sent to her. This supposed divine proclamation dictated that women should obtain the vote in order to protect themselves from the evils of alcohol.⁴³ The WCTU under Willard expanded its reforms outside of matters of liquor and began advocating for cleaner public spaces, better governmental policies, and suffrage. Under this guise, women reformers were seen as less radical. Radical suffragists asked for enfranchisement on the basis that men and women were equal. Nineteenth-century newspapers cast these radicals as masculine, because they relied on the equality strategy to justify women's bid

⁴² "Makes Plea for Equal Suffrage," *Indianapolis Star*, November 19, 1916. This article describes the entirety of Bryan's appearance before the WCTU at the Murat Theater.

⁴³ Gifford, "Frances Willard and the Woman's Christian Temperance Union's Conversion to Woman Suffrage," 127.

for enfranchisement. The WCTU's embrace of suffrage brought a new component to the movement and provided a path for women to use their socially-prescribed gender expectations to obtain the right to vote in specific elections.⁴⁴ Women asked for partial suffrage, meaning suffrage that would give them a voice in their children's schools, their local communities, or in matters of liquor laws. These topics all fell within women's sphere of the home. These arguments convinced some conservative men of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries to support suffrage, and some states extended the right of voting in school board elections to women. This new right was not, however, widely utilized by the newly enfranchised. Perhaps the reason for women's lack of enthusiasm for this particular form of enfranchisement was because most school board elections were not competitive, and therefore, not as enticing to women who wanted to make a difference in their communities.⁴⁵

When the seventieth Indiana General Assembly convened on January 4, 1917, the members were set to discuss a number of contentious bills.⁴⁶ The Indiana legislature met from January until approximately March. Legislators discussed and voted on hundreds of bills in their biannual sessions. Suffrage bills had regularly appeared before the legislature in previous sessions.⁴⁷ Some of the measures the Legislative Council lobbied in favor of, were among the most debated bills discussed during the seventieth session. For example, suffragists supported the bill calling for a constitutional convention. The

⁴⁴ Ibid., 127-132.

⁴⁵ One of the most famous school elections that women did register for in droves was the 1888 Boston School Committee Election. The district was fractured over instituting a history book with a Protestant or a Catholic slant, and women from both sides were encouraged by men to vote because it would affect the education of their children. Polly Kaufman, *Boston Women and City School Politics, 1872-1905* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1994).

⁴⁶ *Journal of the Indiana State Senate During the Seventieth Session of the General Assembly* (Fort Wayne, IN: Fort Wayne Printing Company, 1917), 3.

⁴⁷ Sloan, "Some Aspects of the Woman Suffrage Movement in Indiana," 45-90.

Indiana Constitution, adopted in 1851, was nearly impossible to amend; therefore, it had thwarted Indiana suffragists' efforts since 1859.⁴⁸ The Constitution's long and complicated amendment process caused many reformers to denounce it. Suffragists believed their best chance of getting women's enfranchisement into the Indiana Constitution was to have a completely new one drafted.⁴⁹ Another contentious topic was prohibition which had been associated with women for decades, and it remained a controversial issue among the general population of Indianans.⁵⁰

The first of these bills to be openly debated was the constitutional convention bill. On the day the Senate convened, legislators took the time to honor the Hoosiers who had penned the 1851 Indiana Constitution and the men who had since, with increasing frequency, attempted to alter the document. The legislative journal noted the belief of some legislators that the numerous calls for a new constitution were proof that the public was looking for a document that more accurately reflected the needs of the state.⁵¹ The journal credited the reformers for their efforts and labeled them "forward-looking men and women of Indiana whose qualifications for citizenship are of the first order."⁵² The inclusion of women indicated that their status as reformers was unquestioned. The use of the word citizenship in this passage could be referring to women's call for further rights of citizenship. The duties or rights most often cited by historians writing on citizenship

⁴⁸ Ibid. Sloan analyzes numerous suffrage bills introduced in the General Assembly throughout her dissertation. Almost every legislative session saw a proposed suffrage amendment or bill and each one faced the constitutional barriers.

⁴⁹ "'Voiceless Speech' Makes Plea in Support of Woman Suffrage," *Indianapolis News*, June 11, 1917; "Many Women in State Register the First Day," *Indianapolis News*, June 22, 1917; Ida Husted Harper, "State Suffrage Has Persistent Enemies," *Indianapolis News*, June 28, 1917.

⁵⁰ "Workers for Suffrage Get Congratulations," *Indianapolis News*, February 23, 1917; Paulson, *Women's Suffrage and Prohibition: A Comparative Study of Equality and Social Control*.

⁵¹ *Journal of the Indiana State Senate During the Seventieth Session of the General Assembly* (Fort Wayne, IN: Fort Wayne Printing Company, 1917), 31.

⁵² Ibid.

include property rights, voting rights, and the obligation of answering the nation's call to war.⁵³ Even though the session began by stating women had the qualification for citizenship and one could argue the subtlety of this language foreshadowed the subsequent actions of the legislature, the passage of the partial suffrage act was not an easy victory.

The journal recorded a more forceful assertion on the part of Lieutenant Governor Edgar Bush that the State of Indiana needed a new constitution. Bush stated on January 8, 1917, that the state had progressed beyond the reach of the 1851 Indiana Constitution. He thought that the state needed a document that reflected current Hoosier values.⁵⁴ However, not everyone agreed with the Lieutenant Governor. Ten days after Bush expressed his eager support for a new constitution, the *Indianapolis Star* printed an editorial outlining the implications of a new constitution and warning of the dangers such a change could provoke.⁵⁵ For example, if the new document sought to legislate rather than outline principles, the government would be severely weakened. According to this article, government documents were designed to govern and not legislate. The unnamed author of the editorial argued that the desire for social reforms should not be used to justify the creation of a new constitution. He concluded his assault on the proposed constitutional convention by stating it would probably result in failure. A similar effort two years prior resulted in a referendum which cost the state \$500,000 to \$1,000,000, and subsequently failed.⁵⁶ In spite of such arguments, a constitutional convention act was

⁵³ Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to be Ladies*, xx-xxiv.

⁵⁴ *Journal of the Indiana State Senate During the Seventieth Session of the General Assembly* (Fort Wayne, IN: Fort Wayne Printing Company, 1917), 65.

⁵⁵ "A New Constitution Not Needed," *Indianapolis Star*, January 18, 1917.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

approved on February 1, 1917. The election of delegates to the convention was to occur on the third Tuesday in September.⁵⁷

In a similar manner, the prohibition bill fostered debate in the General Assembly and on the streets of Indianapolis. This debate ran rampant with gendered arguments, and it was clear that women were seen as the driving force for the temperance/prohibition bill as apparent in a letter to the editor published on January 29, 1917, in the *Indianapolis Star*. J. Newton Gilmore of Greensfork, Indiana, wrote to the *Star* that there were men who knew the evils of liquor but refused to vote for a prohibition bill. These men liked to drink and were selfishly immune to others' sufferings. The real victims of alcohol, as seen by Gilmore, were women. Gilmore even declared, "Goddess of Reason! Is it necessary for children, wives and mothers to be beaten, starved and even murdered?"⁵⁸ For decades, the WCTU relied upon the stories of wives of abusive drunks to appeal to legislators. These gendered pleas implanted in the American psyche the idea that women's enfranchisement would make prohibition a certainty.⁵⁹

As in the national prohibition movement, the leadership of Indiana's Legislative Council served as an example of the links between suffrage and prohibition. Luella McWhirter first became active in reform movements when she joined the WCTU in 1893.⁶⁰ She served as the organization's state treasurer in the early 1890s, as the president from 1896 until 1900, and then as the editor of *The Message*, the Indiana state WCTU's

⁵⁷ "Election of Delegates," *Laws of the State of Indiana Passed at the Seventieth Regular Session of the General Assembly 1917*, Chapter 2.

⁵⁸ J. Newton Gilmore, "Effects of Intemperance on Family Pictured," *Indianapolis Star*, January 29, 1917.

⁵⁹ "Indiana Women Vitally Interested in the Constitutional Convention as Shown by their Rush to Qualify as Voters at the Special Election," *Indianapolis News*, June 30, 1917; Ross Evans Paulson, *Women's Suffrage and Prohibition: A Comparative Study of Equality and Social Control*, 1.

⁶⁰ Blanche Foster Boruff, *Women of Indiana* (Indianapolis: Matthew Farson, 1941), 199.

newspaper, for forty-five years.⁶¹ This background launched McWhirter into the presidency of the Legislative Council. The association between the WCTU and the call for suffrage reinforced women's femininity, especially when compared to early Hoosier suffragists who were treated with sarcasm and disdain as strong-minded and manly women.⁶² The WCTU had years of experience touting wives as victims who needed rights, not because they were equal, but because they could not control their husbands or protect themselves from their spouses' drunken wrath. The only means to protect themselves was to prevent the problem and ban liquor through obtaining the vote.⁶³

For example, Myrtle Bowers of Indianapolis wrote to the *Indianapolis Star's* editor that women were attempting to obtain the vote in order to check the evils of liquor. For Bowers, it was a moral question, not one of equality. She posited that "[w]omen do not want the ballot that they may usurp authority over men in public office, for the home still calls for the highest wisdom and the best judgment in its management."⁶⁴ This sentiment was condoned by Willard's home protection argument. However, even women touting their feminine morality argued over the degree of legislative control of liquor.

Mrs. S.C. Southwick, a resident of Chicago, also wrote a letter to the editor of the *Indianapolis Star*. She was a wife, mother of two grown sons, and advocate, not for the prohibition bill, but rather for the original idea of temperance. In this letter, Southwick

⁶¹ Ibid.

⁶² Gallagher, "'The Coming Storm': Women's Suffrage in Indiana, 1851-1881," 6-7. Copy in author's possession.

⁶³ By 1917 there had been little progress in the decades since the WCTU began its crusade; it became apparent that men were unwilling to ban liquor. Mr. Urbain Gohler, a French sociologist, predicted that these men would not last long if women became voters. In a study on American women, Gohler reported that drunkenness, domestic violence, and many social evils would be abolished upon the enfranchisement of women in America. An article on Gohler's findings stated he "considers the modern American woman as the savior of the twentieth century." This predicted power of women made enfranchising them a scary situation for men who enjoyed a shot of whiskey or a pint of beer. O.F. Bertelli, "Drunkenness Doomed as a Result of Equal Suffrage in America," *Indianapolis Times*, November 29, 1916.

⁶⁴ Mrs. Myrtle Bowers, "Suffrage Would Banish Saloon, Says Woman," *Indianapolis Star*, January 29, 1917.

espoused that “[t]he foundation of a good character is to be temperate in the gratification of your desires.” She postulated that the key was not to completely remove the temptation and legislate reform, but to teach children how to monitor their own actions. She believed that banning liquor would not remove the problem because it did not fix the issue of self-control.⁶⁵ However, the days of temperance closed as prohibition gained popularity.

Ultimately, the Indiana General Assembly was swayed and passed a strict prohibition act on February 9, 1917. The popular term for this bill in the local newspapers was the “Bone Dry” Bill.⁶⁶ The law banned all liquids, malts, or vinous fluids containing more than one half of one percent alcohol. It also stated that a person could not sell, trade, give, make, or keep alcohol. People found breaking this law could be fined anywhere from \$100 to \$500 as well as be imprisoned from thirty days to six months in a county jail. Only alcohol for medical purposes, scientific study, and religious customs was exempt.⁶⁷ While women were often seen as the force behind prohibition, this measure passed prior to women obtaining the vote. Women’s lobbying efforts, however, succeeded in convincing men to legislate what had been seen as a women’s issue. The passage of such legislation, including the Eighteenth Amendment nationally, demonstrated the power of women as reformers and lobbyists. After the passage of the “Bone Dry” Act in Indiana, women turned all their attention to suffrage.

The topic of suffrage arose early in the seventieth session of the Indiana General Assembly. Two senators took up women’s bid for partial suffrage while Andrew Beardsley, a long-time suffragist, penned a full suffrage amendment for the Indiana

⁶⁵ Mrs. S.C. Southwick, “She is for Temperance, Not Prohibition,” *Indianapolis Star*, January 15, 1917.

⁶⁶ “Would Defer Time for ‘Bone Dry’ Law,” *Indianapolis Star*, February 23, 1917.

⁶⁷ State Prohibition Act of 1917, *Laws of the State of Indiana Passed at the Seventieth Regular Session of the General Assembly 1917*, Chapter 4, pp. 15-17.

Constitution. However, most Indiana legislators, like the majority of men involved in government across the nation, were not advocates of woman's suffrage. The initial movement for Indiana women to gain enfranchisement began in the 1850s. On January 19, 1859, women addressed a session of the Indiana General Assembly for the first time. These Quaker women lobbied the legislature for enfranchisement on the grounds that men and women were equal and were entitled to equal rights. Some of the most prominent women who lobbied were Indiana's Amanda Way and national suffragist Lucretia Mott.⁶⁸

One tactic the late-nineteenth century and more conservative suffragists used was to ask for the right to vote gradually and in specific elections. This route undercut the ideology that women were equal to men and were entitled to the right to vote, as the women were settling for partial enfranchisement. There were some limited successes with the partial suffrage tactic. The American Woman Suffrage Association, led by Lucy Stone and Henry Blackwell, first utilized the partial suffrage strategy, which the WCTU would later adopt. The gradual route toward suffrage began with women's requests to obtain the right to vote in school board elections, liquor licensing elections, municipal elections, and similar elections. This tactic came about largely after the Civil War when a number of states began granting women the right to vote in school board elections.⁶⁹ This was not a very widely used right, however, and it gave a number of anti-suffragists the fodder they needed in order to claim that women did not want to vote. After 1910 the

⁶⁸ Sloan, "Some Aspects of the Woman Suffrage Movement in Indiana," 13-15; Pat Creech Scholten, "A Public 'Jollification': The 1859 Women's Rights Petition before the Indiana Legislature," *Indiana Magazine of History* 72 no. 4 (December 1976): 347-359.

⁶⁹ Kentucky granted women the right to vote in school board elections in 1838. New Hampshire, Massachusetts, and Mississippi gave women school suffrage in 1878, 1879, and 1880 respectively. In the following thirty years, five other states also extended women the right to vote in school board elections. Martha Block, *An Aid to the Citizens in Indiana* (1919), 44.

movement re-energized and some states, especially in the West, began enfranchising women after a fourteen-year drought of legislation. By 1918, twenty-eight states granted women some form of suffrage through the state-by-state and partial suffrage movements.⁷⁰

By 1916, Indiana was well aligned within the broader suffrage movement when the Legislative Council decided to ask for both partial and full enfranchisement at the state level. Hoosier women were by no means radical in their requests. They requested that the legislature consider full and partial suffrage so that women could obtain the right to vote as quickly as possible and through any means necessary. McWhirter laid out her plans in a letter. She envisioned obtaining partial suffrage in the 1917 session of the Indiana legislature, so that women could vote in municipal elections in the fall of 1917. Additionally, if the constitutional convention bill passed, partial suffrage would enable women to elect people to the constitutional convention who would ensure that full suffrage would be written into the new Constitution. If that plan worked, women would have an ironclad right to full enfranchisement in 1920.⁷¹ In order to further their cause, McWhirter and the majority of Indiana suffragists relied upon conservative ideology.

Since 1869, when Stone and Blackwell first promoted partial suffrage, it was a controversial issue.⁷² As the years passed, it never ceased to be contentious in at least some political circles. Some Hoosiers did not understand why partial suffrage was a logical option. When the notion first arose, suffragists saw it as a hindrance to equal rights and, to a degree, that sentiment remained with part of the movement. James H.

⁷⁰ Ultimately, Indiana passed a presidential suffrage act in 1919. Ibid., 41-44.

⁷¹ Luella McWhirter to Miss Hawkins, January 31, 1917, Luella McWhirter Papers, Box 2, folder labeled "Legislative Council of Indiana Women," Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.

⁷² Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 146.

Hamilton of Greensburg, Indiana, wrote to the editor of the *Indianapolis Star* that the “half measure is going to clog the work of the next Legislatures, complicate our balloting system and it only postpones the inevitable—for everyone knows that women are going to have equal rights with men.”⁷³ The partial suffrage bill included women’s right to vote in numerous local elections, but not the gubernatorial election. Some suffragists were confused by the logic of asking for partial suffrage. However, by asking for limited rights, women thought they could skirt the 1851 Indiana Constitution while still appeasing some anti-suffragists who decried women’s interference in masculine matters.

On January 16, 1917, two junior state senators, Marion Hiram Maston and Arthur McKinley, introduced a partial suffrage bill. Maston, a two-term Democrat, was elected to the Senate in 1915. He represented Huntington and Whitley counties.⁷⁴ McKinley of Delaware County was a newly elected Republican.⁷⁵ The partial suffrage bill, Senate Bill No. 77, was “a bill for an act granting women the right to vote for presidential electors and certain other officers, and to vote in certain elections.”⁷⁶ The bill was read before the legislature and, subsequently, was passed on to the Committee on Rights and Privileges.⁷⁷

In February 1917, Indiana legislators were not the only ones who debated whether or not women should receive the right to vote. Suffragists and anti-suffragists alike lobbied legislatures and attempted to sway public opinion. Nineteen Indianapolis women even submitted a petition to the legislature, asking it not to extend to women the right to

⁷³ James H. Hamilton, “Why Just Part Suffrage: Woman’s Friend Asks,” *Indianapolis Star*, February 16, 1917.

⁷⁴ Justin E. Walsh, ed., *A Biographical Directory of the Indiana General Assembly*, vol. 2 (Indianapolis: The Select Committee on the Centennial History of the Indiana General Assembly, 1984), 273-274, 284-285.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*

⁷⁶ *Journal of the Indiana State Senate During the Seventieth Session of the General Assembly* (Fort Wayne, IN: Fort Wayne Printing Company, 1917), 140.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

vote.⁷⁸ Mrs. Lucius B. Swift addressed the Indiana House and asked the men to vote against suffrage, claiming mothers were only concerned about their homes and their children, not the vote. She was in the minority among the speakers present and declared the House to be a “Suffrage Love Feast.”⁷⁹

One of the most outspoken anti-suffragists who visited Indianapolis in 1917 was Minnie Bronson of Massachusetts. The *Indianapolis Times* which consistently supported women’s bid for enfranchisement was particularly critical in its description of Bronson’s rhetorical performance. The paper compared her to “Fighting” Bob LaFollette, an infamously long-winded member of the United States Senate from Wisconsin, because Bronson stretched her argument to blame Utah’s Mormonism, Colorado’s labor unrest, and California’s exploitive canning companies’ labor conditions on women voters.⁸⁰ The *Indianapolis Times* stated that Bronson’s anti-suffrage sentiments were ill-founded.⁸¹

However far-flung or problematic these arguments, the idea that women did not want the vote was a widely discussed issue. V.I. Messersmith of Indianapolis penned a letter to the editor applauding the nineteen women who had petitioned the General Assembly to deny women the vote. He compared men’s lives to war and noted that women’s role in the home was necessary to support husbands and children. Messersmith echoed other anti-suffragists’ beliefs that women simply did not have the energy to worry about politics after taking care of “‘John’ and the ‘Kiddies.’” He further postulated that if women were polled on the subject, “the suffrage platform would be wiped out of

⁷⁸ “Ask Suffrage Bill Killed,” *Indianapolis Star*, January 20, 1917.

⁷⁹ “Antis Routed by Arguments for Suffrage,” *Indianapolis Times*, February 14, 1917.

⁸⁰ Ibid.; See also “A Speech LaFollette Didn’t Make,” *Indianapolis Star*, February 13, 1917. LaFollette spoke for days on various topics in Congress. He was losing respect, however, as his talks increasingly went against President Wilson’s stance on the impending entrance into the Great War.

⁸¹ Ibid.

existence instantly. While the bill was passed it will not be because the majority wish [sic].”⁸² Not only did he note that women did not desire the vote, Messersmith also wrote that women were not “refined” enough to handle the responsibility of voting and that women in the West simply voted for or against men who looked like their husbands or were attractive.⁸³

Ann Isabella Emmons of Lebanon, Indiana, expressed similar sentiments. Emmons argued that women had too many responsibilities in life without the additional obligation of voting. In her mind, a woman dedicated herself to her home, and such work should consume three-fourths of a woman’s life. Any remaining energy a woman had should then be spent working for her church and working within women’s clubs to improve society and the lives of children. Emmons even called into question the ideology that women could cleanse the political atmosphere. It was her belief that “a bad girl, little or big, is the worst thing upon the earth. She is more stealthy, cunning, relentless, and secretive than a boy would ever think of being. A man is more outspoken, can view his fellowman dispassionately, with less jealousy than women do.”⁸⁴

While Emmons dethroned women’s moral superiority in order to denounce women’s entrance into the political realm, Cora Hassey of Indianapolis expressed her belief that women were too good to enter the political arena. In her letter to the editor of the *Star*, Hassey made it clear that, not only did women not want rights, they should not

⁸² V.I. Messersmith, “Not Very Strong for Suffrage,” *Indianapolis Star*, February 2, 1917.

⁸³ Ibid. Such anti-suffrage sentiment had been the majority view for decades. Historian Sarah Hunter Graham argued anti-suffragists’ work and sacrifice were part of the reason women were not enfranchised after the Civil War despite their supportive aid to the Union during the war. According to Graham, the women who worked for the preservation of the Union were not interested enough in the elective franchise for it to be extended to them. Sarah Hunter Graham, *Woman Suffrage and New Democracy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996). 105.

⁸⁴ Mrs. Ann Isabella Emmons, “Woman Says Only Few Desire Suffrage,” *Indianapolis Star*, February 19, 1917.

desire the vote. If they had a taste for reform, they should volunteer instead. Hassey believed women “have a nobler mission in life” than politics as, “she does not have any business at the polls among all classes of men . . . a real, honest, upright wife or mother would rather be at home with her duties than at the polls.”⁸⁵ Hassey’s notions were prevalent enough in society that suffragists responded directly to her letter to combat similar arguments by other anti-suffragists.

Mrs. W. Phelps of Indianapolis responded specifically to Cora Hassey’s statement that women did not have the strength or time to dedicate themselves to political thought because of their extensive work in the home. Phelps, a wife and mother, claimed she was not well-versed on the subject of suffrage, but she wrote that if a woman only exerted herself in her home she would not be a successful mother. Instead, she would become a “mental parasite,” would lose her ability to contribute any important context and conversation, and would only absorb intelligence from those around her.⁸⁶ If a woman only exerted herself in the home, she would be left to “look up” to her more intellectual children and husband rather than “adore them” and help them grow.⁸⁷ Phelps also appeared to take offense at Hassey’s description of unmarried women dedicating themselves to charity work. Phelps hoped that the charity work Hassey promoted would be dedicated to converting the backward views of women like Hassey.⁸⁸

As the debate centered on whether or not women would neglect their homes if they received the vote, a number of men weighed in on the topic as well. Capitola Gradwohl addressed a letter from a California man that was printed in the *Indianapolis*

⁸⁵ Mrs. Cora Hassey, “Thinks Woman’s Place Is at Home,” *Indianapolis Star*, February 8, 1917.

⁸⁶ Mrs. W. Phelps, “A Mother Defends Suffrage,” *Indianapolis Star*, February 9, 1917.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

Star. In his letter, Mr. John P. Irish warned of the problems he had witnessed living in the West, where women had been given the vote in some territories/states as early as 1869. Irish blamed western women for the corruption that ran rampant in his state. He saw corruption in the political realm as a symptom of femininity, weakness, and dishonesty.⁸⁹ Gradwohl would not accept these accusations, however, and responded that corruption was widespread and not simply in states where women were allowed to enter the political realm. She wrote that he, “shames his manhood, if he has any, by a slanderous and cowardly attack upon earnest and high-minded women who seek to broaden their horizon and enlarge their sphere of usefulness by an intelligent study of and participation in the things that affect their homes and welfare.”⁹⁰ Gradwohl furthered her assertion by writing that Irish merely finger-pointed and blamed the other guy while women attempted to fix any problems with gusto.⁹¹

The idea of morally superior women who strove to improve society was likewise echoed in a letter that appeared in the *Indianapolis Star*. Mrs. W.E. Ochiltree of Connersville, Indiana, wrote briefly of the good that women voters could achieve and declared that the majority of women in Connersville never showed “militant enthusiasm over the vote.” They were, instead, the essence of “dignified womanhood,” and this group of women “anxiously awaits the right of franchise.”⁹² This letter also emphasized the conservative bid of the women who wanted to vote. They were not radicals; rather they were the embodiment of the ideals that society expected from women—quiet, companionate, dignified, and patient.

⁸⁹ Capitola Gradwohl, “Hogging Ballot From Woman Draws Rap for Mere Man,” *Indianapolis Star*, January 29, 1917.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Mrs. W.E. Ochiltree, “Women of Connersville Favor Suffrage,” *Indianapolis Star*, January 29, 1917.

A letter to the *Star* editor signed S.H. Makepeace relied upon maternalist arguments. Makepeace, presumably a woman from Anderson, Indiana, implored anti-suffragists to think about their argument that women should remain in the home caring for children and yet were not deemed wise enough to vote. Women raised the sons of America, and if they were not able to think logically, there would be no good men to elect to office. Makepeace believed motherhood was the crux of womanhood, and women should be able to vote in order to infuse the political system with a better moral code. Objectors to woman's suffrage must be "soured on womanhood [or are] extremely selfish by denying them the privilege that is given to the lowest type of ignorant man. Do these objectors forget that they owe their existence and what they are to their mothers?"⁹³ Makepeace blamed anti-suffrage sentiments on people who were against prohibition, "who want to continue to pollute the morals and drag humanity down into the ditch, to wreck and ruin homes and like the vultures they are, prey upon humanity."⁹⁴ By early February 1917, Indianapolis newspapers gave the impression that the anti-suffragists knew they were defeated, and it seemed clear that the legislature leaned toward passing the suffrage bill despite widespread debate on the topic.⁹⁵

Both anti-suffragists and pro-suffragists who penned letters argued their stances based upon the notion of women's inherent differences from men. Early in the suffrage movement, the majority of Indiana suffragists used the egalitarian ideology of Quakerism to argue that women and men were entitled to the same rights. As the WCTU began influencing suffragists, women fought not just for rights, but also for the regulation of alcohol in order to protect themselves and their children from the poverty, abuse, and

⁹³ S.H. Makepeace, "Anti-Suffrage Claims Are Given Lash," *Indianapolis Star*, February 16, 1917.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ "Suffrage Hits Ambush in House of Republicans," *Indianapolis Times*, February 7, 1917.

psychological damage caused by alcoholism. When the crossover between the WCTU and suffrage occurred through Frances Willard's "home protection" ideology, the suffrage movement changed. More radical suffragists would have a resurgence after 1913 in the form of Alice Paul and the National Woman's Party.⁹⁶

However, the two major warring factions in Indianapolis were not the radical and conservative forces that were facing off at the national level, but rather a conservative and more conservative group of women. Both Hoosier suffragists and anti-suffragists saw their lives as revolving around their homes. There is no evidence that Hoosier women participated in any of the more radical tactics in Indiana during 1917, such as parades or public displays in the street in their efforts to obtain the passage of the vote.⁹⁷ Indiana women used their gender in order to seem less threatening to the men who had control over the extension of their rights.

In the legislature, there were seemingly fewer squabbles than on the streets of Indianapolis. While the suffrage bill was originally introduced in January, it was edited a number of times before its passage.⁹⁸ On February 7, 1917, the senate debated the bill once again.⁹⁹ A number of anti-suffrage senators attempted to delay passage by having the measure put before the male voters of Indiana in a special election on the question of enfranchising women to be held in September 1917.¹⁰⁰ This delay tactic would have kept women from voting in the constitutional convention election, and by extension, kept

⁹⁶ There was a branch of the National Woman's Party in Indianapolis, but it did not seem to be a major force in the suffrage landscape of Indianapolis and appeared to be relatively inactive in comparison to the Franchise League and Legislative Council.

⁹⁷ McCammon, "'Out of the Parlors and into the Streets': The Changing Tactical Repertoire of the U.S. Women's Suffrage Movements," 787-818.

⁹⁸ *Journal of the Indiana State Senate During the Seventieth Session of the General Assembly* (Fort Wayne, IN: Fort Wayne Printing Company, 1917), 559.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 558.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 559.

women from electing men who would write full suffrage into the Indiana Constitution. The tactic was defeated, twenty-six to sixteen. Anti-suffrage legislators did, however, strike the emergency clause from the bill; this clause would have allowed women to vote in the primary election of March 1917. Without the emergency clause, women would have to wait until the end of May before the bill officially became law.¹⁰¹

Also during this session, Senator James Roy Fleming of Jay County brought up the question of whether passing a law extending suffrage to women was constitutional. He identified Article II, Section 2 of the Indiana Constitution, which explicitly used the words “male citizen.”¹⁰² Additionally, Democratic Senator D. Frank Culbertson of Vincennes voted against the bill because he did not see any evidence that the women of the state desired the franchise.¹⁰³ Despite these efforts and concerns, the bill passed the Senate on February 8 and then moved to the House.¹⁰⁴ The bill passed in the House on February 22, 1917.¹⁰⁵ On February 28, Governor Goodrich signed Senate Bill No. 77, the Woman’s Suffrage Act of 1917, into law. Women would officially have the right to vote after the official waiting period ended in May 31, 1917.¹⁰⁶

The final version of the partial suffrage act gave women residents of the state who were twenty-one years and older the right to vote for presidential electors, for constitutional convention delegates, and for the ratification of the new Constitution. They were also granted the right to vote for numerous state and local positions such as statistician, geologist, and judges in the criminal, probate, appellate, superior, and

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² “Triumph Cheered By Women,” *Indianapolis Star*, February 9, 1917.

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ *Journal of the Indiana State Senate During the Seventieth Session of the General Assembly* (Fort Wayne, IN: Fort Wayne Printing Company, 1917), p. 573.

¹⁰⁵ *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Indiana During the Seventieth Session of the General Assembly* (Fort Wayne, IN: Fort Wayne Printing Company, 1917), pp. 535-536.

¹⁰⁶ “Signs Suffrage Bill with Wife as Witness,” *Indianapolis News*, February 28, 1917.

juvenile courts. At the local level, women could vote for county assessors, township trustees, school officers, county council members, and advisory board members.¹⁰⁷ Women still would not be able to vote for offices such as governor, secretary of state, treasurer of state, United States senators and representatives, or to ratify new constitutional amendments.¹⁰⁸ Moreover, women would cast their ballots in separate boxes than men, and their ballots would then be counted separately.¹⁰⁹ Men and women would have different ballots because women could not vote in all the elections, so keeping the ballots separate was deemed logical for ease in tabulating votes in an election. Separate ballot boxes also allowed men to monitor the broader trends of women's voting. As newspapers disclosed the results of elections along gender lines, men could, theoretically, repeal the law or block women's efforts for full enfranchisement if they found women displayed little interest in actually voting.

The partial suffrage act was not the only suffrage bill to pass in the 1917 Indiana legislative session; the Beardsley Full Suffrage Amendment passed and would be reconsidered when the General Assembly reconvened in 1919. The proposed Full Suffrage Amendment read:

In all elections not otherwise provided for by this constitution, every female citizen of the United States, of the age of twenty-one years and upwards, who shall have resided in the State during the one year and in the township sixty days, and in the ward or precinct thirty days immediately preceding such election, shall be entitled to vote in the township or precinct where she may reside, if she shall have been duly registered according to law.¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁷ "What the Bill Provides," *Indianapolis Star*, February 23, 1917.

¹⁰⁸ "Triumph is Cheered By Women," *Indianapolis Star*, February 9, 1917.

¹⁰⁹ Woman Suffrage Act of 1917, *Laws of the State of Indiana Passed at the Seventieth Regular Session of the General Assembly 1917*, Chapter 31, pp. 73-74.

¹¹⁰ Amendment Proposed to Article II of Section 2 of the Constitution of the State of Indiana, *Laws of the State of Indiana Passed at the Seventieth Regular Session of the General Assembly 1917*, Chapter 188, p. 705. The Amendment would not be considered again for two years because the General Assembly met bi-annually.

If the voters of Indiana ratified the Beardsley Full Suffrage Amendment, women's right to vote would essentially be irrevocable. It would also allow women to cast ballots in all elections, not just a few. The Indiana Constitution, however, was difficult to amend. An amendment had to be approved by two successive legislatures before it was placed before the people in a referendum. In the referendum, the proposed amendment had to win the majority of the votes and win the majority of the ballots themselves. If a voter skipped that section of the ballot, it counted against the amendment. Only one amendment could be considered at a time; therefore, one act might delay the entire amendment process for years.¹¹¹ The Beardsley Amendment passed in 1917; therefore, it would appear on the docket for affirmation in 1919. If affirmed it would then appear on the 1920 referendum and only male voters would decide whether the Beardsley Full Suffrage Amendment would become part of the constitution. Looking at this complex and time-consuming process it became understandable that women asked for legislative action to obtain partial suffrage because partial suffrage became effective almost immediately.

The tricky barrier that legislators faced in their efforts to block women voters was that both the national Democratic and national Republican party platforms in 1916 included their support for state action in favor of woman's suffrage. In the eyes of suffragists, either the men elected on those platforms would honor their words or prove themselves dishonest. As the *Indianapolis Times* reported: "The women of Indiana put the matter squarely up to the legislators and serenely and confidently await honest and favorable action."¹¹² This waiting quietly worked well for the conservative women in other areas of reform.

¹¹¹ Block, *An Aid to the Citizens in Indiana*, 42.

¹¹² "Anti-Suffrage Forces Making Last Struggle," *Indianapolis Times*, February 7, 1917.

While suffrage was a contentious topic, Hoosier women were successful in obtaining the passage of other bills on the Legislative Council of Indiana Women's agenda. Indiana suffragists were truly reformers, seeking to improve American society. In 1985, historian Barbara Springer labeled these women "domestic feminists."¹¹³ They would not, however, have called themselves feminists. Granted, they had taken a step out into society and advocated for increased rights for women and children, but for all of their reform activities, they would not have identified themselves as radicals. Feminism, since its inception, has been identified with radicalism.¹¹⁴ Indiana suffragists were either careful to avoid radicalism, or they adhered to their social conditioning at a time which would have dictated that "womanly" women acted in a conservative and mild-mannered fashion. It was through participation in women's clubs that Hoosier women felt comfortable enough to demand rights, laws, and social reform. These actions make sense given the picture of the typical Indiana clubwoman and suffragist. Most were white, middle to upper-class women, married to socially connected men. The leaders of these organizations, women like Luella McWhirter, Grace Julian Clarke, and Marie Stuart Edwards, were educated, financially secure, childless or had grown children, and had husbands who supported their women's aspirations. This was the typical profile for clubwoman leadership.¹¹⁵ These women used their social connections and femininity to push for their reforms.

Even though the Legislative Council successfully obtained the passage of a number of the reforms they promoted (the partial suffrage bill, the constitutional convention bill, and the prohibition bill), they recognized there was much more work to

¹¹³ Springer, "Ladylike Reformers: Indiana Women and Progressive Reform, 1900-1920," 5.

¹¹⁴ The Oxford English Dictionary cites its first usage in mid-nineteenth century England.

¹¹⁵ Springer, "Ladylike Reformers: Indiana Women and Progressive Reform, 1900-1920," 16-17.

be done. In a letter to WCTU members in Terre Haute, Indiana, McWhirter wrote, “our work has just begun. We have been given a tool in the form of partial suffrage.”¹¹⁶

Women would need to use their partial suffrage rights in order to elect good people to the constitutional convention and ensure that suffrage and prohibition were permanent.

Women were keen to have suffrage written into the constitution, because Hoosiers had watched as other states questioned their suffrage rights. Illinois, in particular, captivated Indianans in 1913 when some Illinois residents questioned the law giving women presidential suffrage. As Hoosier suffragists pushed forward they were confident of their rights. Elizabeth T. Stanley of Liberty, Indiana, wrote to the *Indianapolis Star*: “Power comes with the ballot. It is not an experiment—it has been fully tried—and the law of Illinois has stood the test of the courts, and her constitution is similar to our own, hence no fear on the grounds of unconstitutionality.”¹¹⁷ With this expectation in mind, Indiana women dedicated themselves to becoming educated and engaged citizens.

¹¹⁶ Luella McWhirter to Honey Creek W.C.T.U., April 18, 1917, Luella McWhirter Papers, Box 6, Folder “Indiana Women’s Suffrage,” Lilly Library, Bloomington, IN.

¹¹⁷ Elizabeth T. Stanley, “Woman Addresses Appeal for Full Suffrage,” *Indianapolis Star*, February 16, 1917.

Chapter 2: Preparation for the Vote

“Woman’s world is now a man’s world, and it was his failures and her needs which have brought them together to form a world better than any yet known” proclaimed Grace Julian Clarke, prominent clubwoman and daughter of Indiana politician George Julian, at a celebration of the passage of the partial suffrage bill.¹¹⁸ Hoosier women achieved a landmark feat in obtaining the passage of partial suffrage in 1917. However, the monumental task of gaining full suffrage remained before them. Politicians courted this new bloc of women voters. Clarke reminded women that simple words of flattery must not persuade them to vote for inferior candidates. Women had to educate themselves, research politicians’ backgrounds, and analyze voting records. Clarke believed that women would usher in a new age of politics that would not completely overhaul the system, but would guarantee better elected officials “because the mothers help select the candidates.”¹¹⁹ While women voters claimed they had the ability to cleanse the political realm, they also had to work within the established party system.

Grace Julian Clarke’s words extended beyond women’s clubs and reached the public through her column in the *Indianapolis Star*. Clarke told women not to choose a party. She stressed that women did not owe the men who granted them suffrage any kind of debt or allegiance. Politicians needed to be judged based upon their stances on issues, not on what they had done for women in the past. While urging women to be nonpartisan, Clarke also encouraged them to consider voting for an educated man (like President

¹¹⁸ Quoted in Helen Ernestinoff, “Suffrage Toasts Honor Dr. Keller,” *Indianapolis Star*, April 19, 1917.

¹¹⁹ Grace Julian Clarke, “Ballot Makes Women Popular in Both Parties,” *Indianapolis Star*, March 11, 1917.

Woodrow Wilson). Endorsing a candidate often meant promoting a political ideology, which made not expressing an opinion and claiming to be nonpartisan a tricky task.¹²⁰

The *Indianapolis Times* opposed Clarke's call for nonpartisanship and quoted Susan B. Anthony to urge women to choose a party with the reassurance that they did not have to stay in that party for life.¹²¹ The *Times* also reprinted a letter asking women to join the Republican Party because Republicans had granted women the right to vote.¹²² Mrs. William F. Clark quickly penned a response to this letter and declared that she would not be a Republican because the party had waited forty years after granting African American men the right to vote before doing so for women.¹²³ She also stated she would not identify as a Democrat and differed from Grace Julian Clarke when she asserted she would not take on the title of "non partisan" either. Mrs. William F. Clark declared herself part of the Prohibition Party because it was the first political party to put woman's suffrage on its national platform.¹²⁴ Navigating the political arena outside the party system, however, proved impossible and unrealistic. Political parties defined American political life, and women who took an avid interest in politics found themselves compelled to join a camp.¹²⁵

Throughout the suffrage movement, anti-suffragists attacked women voters on the grounds that women would make ill-informed electoral decisions. At the Claypool Hotel

¹²⁰ Grace Julian Clarke, "Hoosier Women Busy Organizing Voting Leagues," *Indianapolis Star*, March 25, 1917. Clarke may have endorsed Wilson for a number of reasons, including the good press of throwing her support behind a recently elected and popular wartime president. Her support was also noteworthy because of the National Woman's Party's denunciation of his campaign the previous year.

¹²¹ "Partisanship Politics Gets Suffrage Aid," *Indianapolis Times*, March 23, 1917.

¹²² "Woman in Letter Scorns Overtures of the G.O.P.," *Indianapolis Times*, March 17, 1917.

¹²³ Ibid.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

¹²⁵ Some women not only joined political parties, but entered the party leadership by the 1920s. Daisy Douglas Barr was the first woman vice-chair of the Indiana Republican party. She received this appointment in the early 1920s but resigned in 1923 due to her rising image as a KKK leader. Dwight W. Hoover, "Daisy Douglas Barr: From Quaker to Klan 'Kluckeress,'" *Indiana Magazine of History* 87, no. 2 (June 1991): 187.

while making a speech about the importance of nonpartisan politics, Frederick Landis of Logansport urged women to be serious and not “double the muttonhead vote.”¹²⁶ He quipped that it was appropriate that women had acquired the vote and educated themselves about politics during spring, the season noted for intensive cleaning. He urged women to “hold the broom above all party emblems.”¹²⁷ This notion of cleaning the political house put additional pressure on women voters. Not only did women have the burden of simply being voters, they had fought for the vote on the grounds that they would wield it better than men. In Indiana, women voted in separate ballot boxes and their votes would be reported in the newspaper separately from men’s votes. This meant women’s participation would be clearly on display and subject to men’s judgment. Mindful of this public display, women avidly studied public affairs, politics, and governmental structures in order to vote responsibly and to prove they could indeed make better electoral decisions than men.¹²⁸

Civic Leagues formed en masse across the state, and the Woman’s Franchise League of Indiana and the American Red Cross began including civic lessons in their meetings.¹²⁹ Women had the burden of not only learning civics, but also making sure these lessons were visible to men. Anti-suffrage forces said women would only vote for the attractive candidates, for candidates who attended their churches, or candidates for whom their husbands told them to vote.¹³⁰ In order to combat these rumors, suffragists

¹²⁶ Women Plugging Hard for Vote,” *Indianapolis Star*, April 18, 1917.

¹²⁷ “Franchise League Votes for Union,” *Indianapolis News*, April 18, 1917.

¹²⁸ Some women resisted their new right. Belinda Brewster warned readers of her column in the Woman’s Pages of the Sunday edition of the *Indianapolis Star* that their invitation to a May Day party might not be what it appeared to be. She warned her readers to “[l]ook twice before you begin to mentally get out your best bib and tucker, for that invitation may be a call to lure you into the political campaign.” “Suffragists’ Lure May Lie in Bids to May Day Party,” *Indianapolis Star*, March 25, 1917.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Ibid.

made sure the steps taken to educate women were visible to the public. One newspaper article included the following anecdote, “[i]f mother, and perhaps grandmother, can have any influence with debutante daughter Gladys she’s not going to get to vote for the handsomest man, according to all the traditions of the antis. Pretty Gladys is going to have to learn all the whys and the wherefores of the voting proposition.”¹³¹ Gladys’s mother and grandmother held the responsibility of keeping Gladys’s political decisions in check; her father and grandfather were not overseeing her political education. Perhaps this anecdote was deliberately written to show that even pretty Gladys would eventually become part of the moral women’s voting bloc, rather than merely joining the ranks of the men.

As women began to take responsibility for their own civic educations, women’s clubs began to incorporate voter education into their agendas at the suggestion of Grace Julian Clarke in her weekly newspaper column.¹³² The WCTU, an organization that represented about 12,000 suffragists, began to regularly study civic lessons during its meetings.¹³³ Indiana clubwomen hosted speakers to encourage their members to vote critically. For example, the Woman’s Department Club of Indianapolis hosted a speaker from Wisconsin in March 1917 to encourage women to use their votes to advocate for minimum wage legislation for women workers.¹³⁴ However, not every woman belonged to a club; therefore, suffragists needed another method to reach the masses.

The *Indianapolis Star* ran a column in the spring of 1917 to educate women voters. The column, “Home Study Class for Women Voters,” began March 27 and ran

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Grace Julian Clarke, “Ballot Makes Women Popular in Both Parties,” *Indianapolis Star*, March 11, 1917.

¹³³ “Woman Suffrage Leading Theme for Lunch Club,” *Indianapolis Times*, March 3, 1917.

¹³⁴ “Club Members Urged to Wield Vote for Uplift,” *Indianapolis Star*, March 9, 1917.

through May. The newspaper explained that women had no previous occasion or need to familiarize themselves with the rules and responsibilities of voters; therefore, some women lacked the fundamental knowledge required to be responsible citizens. Kate A. Thompson, an experienced Indianapolis teacher who had studied and taught courses on politics, penned the articles that appeared on Tuesdays, Thursdays, Saturdays, and Sundays. Thompson meant for the column to truly be a home study course where readers would write to her and help direct the conversation.¹³⁵ In her first column, Thompson attempted to calm women voters by comparing the governmental duty before them to the impending wartime draft that men faced. She assured her readers: “Realization, for the moment, almost bewilders, but ability to perform will come by a few months of preparation.”¹³⁶ This preparation ranged from basic definitions of laws and political offices to more complex social ideologies.

The timing of the 1917 education campaign provided a telling picture of Indiana society, as the women were also being indoctrinated to support President Wilson and the effort to win World War I.¹³⁷ America entered the Great War in April 1917, and men registered for the draft. Newspaper columns included information for voting, but also publicized the importance of women’s prayers and help in the war effort. One column harkened back to Joan of Arc and encouraged women to rise up by the thousands, leave their homes, and take part in leading their country to victory. Women “have heard the voices bidding them leave the peace and comfort and security of their sheltered home life

¹³⁵ “The Star’s Home Study Class for Women Voters,” *Indianapolis Star*, March 25, 1917.

¹³⁶ Kate A. Thompson, “Home Study Class for Women Voters,” *Indianapolis Star*, April 1, 1917.

¹³⁷ “Club Members Urged to Wield Vote for Uplift,” *Indianapolis Star*, March 9, 1917; Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You*, 83.

and go forth to toil and hardship and even danger.”¹³⁸ While this article focused on urging women to enter the workforce, these words, when put in the context of suffrage, were likewise inspirational and read similarly to the gendered rhetoric that defined the suffrage movement since it joined forces with the WCTU. Therefore, at the same time that women finally entered the metaphorically dirty political world, many also made their debut in the literally filthy industrial arena.

Institutions that had previously rarely hired women now found themselves courting women workers. Women worked in all kinds of factories at different skill levels.¹³⁹ They took over jobs on the railroad, picked up the slack on family farms, worked in factories, and ensured the home front produced enough goods to support the nation’s war effort. As industry sought women workers, propaganda touted the advantages of women workers as replacements for the men who were shipped overseas. Propaganda assured women of the respectability of work and assured men that women had the necessary skills for such labor. One report read, “for all manner of skilled labor requiring close application, great accuracy and considerable manual ability, but no extreme strength, women are superior to men.”¹⁴⁰ While this propaganda validated women, the government did not want permanent replacements for male workers or a complete change to society’s gender structure.¹⁴¹ Middle and upper class women would not have worked a job in manufacturing or transportation. They still participated in the

¹³⁸ “Women Go Forth to Help in War,” *Indianapolis Star*, March 18, 1917.

¹³⁹ Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You*, 103-104; Zeiger, *In Uncle Sam’s Service*; Clifton Phillips, *Indiana in Transition* (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Bureau & Indiana Historical Society, 1968), 597-598; “Women in Men’s Places,” *Indianapolis News*, May 10, 1917.

¹⁴⁰ “Women in Men’s Places,” *Indianapolis News*, May 10, 1917.

¹⁴¹ Zeiger, *In Uncle Sam’s Service*, 163-167.

war effort, only in more traditionally feminine ways such as tending gardens, conserving food, and knitting socks.¹⁴²

Women found themselves in entirely new economic and social positions when the United States entered World War I. The women of the United States had not been actively called upon to fulfill citizenship duties since the Civil War. Once the war effort began, society expected all women (including suffragists) to answer the call of the government.¹⁴³ Suffragists underwrote Liberty Loans, knitted socks, canned food, and ensured that society continued to function even while many men were away.¹⁴⁴ However, suffragists also had to bear the burden that noted pacifists comprised their leadership.¹⁴⁵ This was a reputation that continued to permeate Hoosier society although many women visibly contributed to the war effort.¹⁴⁶ Jeannette Rankin, the newly-elected congresswoman from Montana, cast her vote against the war.¹⁴⁷ As the only person in Congress to vote against entering the Great War and the only woman in Congress, her nay became a widespread news item.¹⁴⁸

Perhaps in an attempt to combat the image of suffragists as unpatriotic pacifists, Indiana suffragists prominently displayed the American flag, learned patriotic songs like “The Star-Spangled Banner” in their entirety, joined the American Red Cross in droves,

¹⁴² “National Suffrage Body Plans to Aid War Steps of U.S. With Farming,” *Indianapolis Times*, March 27, 1917; Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You*, 114.

¹⁴³ Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You*, 103-104; Breen, *Uncle Sam at Home*, 138.

¹⁴⁴ “Suffragists Real Help to Nation,” *Indianapolis Times*, July 14, 1917.

¹⁴⁵ Susan Zeiger, “She Didn’t Raise Her Boy to Be a Slacker: Motherhood, Conscription, and the Culture of the First World War,” 6-39.

¹⁴⁶ “Patriotic Duty vs Anti-Suffrage Suits: Enemies of Votes for Women Keep Up the Fight in War Time,” *The Hoosier Suffragist*, August 22, 1917.

¹⁴⁷ Jeannette Rankin was the first woman elected to the United States Congress. She was seated in March 1917 and her election was surrounded with much of the moral rhetoric used in the Indiana suffrage campaign. “Women to Make Nation Greater,” *Indianapolis Star*, March 25, 1917; Norma Smith, *Jeannette Rankin, America’s Conscience* (Helena: Montana Historical Society Press, 2002).

¹⁴⁸ “Woman and War,” *Indianapolis Times*, April 16, 1917.

and sent their sons and husbands off to war while taking their places in society.¹⁴⁹

Suffragists dedicated themselves to the war cause even, according to some, to the degree that it negatively affected their bid for full enfranchisement. Charity Dye of Indianapolis spoke on the topic and declared that “women of the Hoosier state have waited for recognition for a century, but that if necessary the movement can be delayed until victory has been won for American arms.”¹⁵⁰ Winona Wilcox echoed the sentiment in a letter to the editor of the *Indianapolis Times*. She wrote that the major by-product of war for women was patience. The women had to be patient for their men to come home, patient for peace to come, patient with their wounded male family members, and seemingly patient for the recognition of their work and the extension of their rights. Wilcox claimed this was just the nature of war from ancient times until the present.¹⁵¹ Women needed to be patient because the war had to take center stage.

Despite the words of women like Wilcox, suffragists also knew they could not completely drop their cause. Therefore, women continued to campaign for full suffrage, educated themselves on civics, and contributed to preparations for the Great War. On April 17, 1917, the Woman’s Franchise League of Indiana began its sixth annual convention.¹⁵² Members met to discuss their coming work and their past accomplishments. The organization especially planned actions to ensure the passage of a full suffrage amendment in the new state constitution. The convention not only

¹⁴⁹ “Club Folk Called to ‘Do Their Bit’ in Impending War,” *Indianapolis Star*, April 8, 1917.

¹⁵⁰ “Women Anxious to Share in War,” *Indianapolis Star*, August 3, 1917.

¹⁵¹ Winona Wilcox, “By-Product of Patriotism: An Editorial for Women,” *Indianapolis Times*, July 4, 1917.

¹⁵² Report of the Sixth Annual Woman’s Franchise League Convention, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 2, Folder 1, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis. The convention was held at the Claypool Hotel in Indianapolis. On the evening of April 17, 1917, Governor James Goodrich spoke at the formal opening. For the next few days, women discussed the war effort, their plan for the constitutional convention, and they began organizing the statewide canvassing effort.

emphasized the importance of educating women on how to be proper voters, the women also discussed how they could prepare to serve their country during wartime.¹⁵³

Suffragists recognized that they could gain more popular support for full enfranchisement by demonstrating their “readiness to serve the county in any capacity possible.”¹⁵⁴ Likewise, prior to the state convention, local chapters of the Franchise League went on record touting their stance on the war. The women of the Ninth District of the Woman’s Franchise League resolved:

That as women we do our share, by conserving the food and clothing supply, raising and encouraging our neighbors to raise, at least part of their food, vegetables and chickens and see that there is not waste from such, that we set an example for simple living, dressing and entertaining while our sons and our neighbors’ sons are preparing for the defense of our country. That in pursuing our freedom as citizens, gaining our equal political rights we are serving the generations following us, and are patriotic in the highest degree.¹⁵⁵

Even though suffragists dedicated themselves to the war effort, the main reason for the annual convention was to secure full voting rights.

The Franchise League planned to canvass every woman in the state to promote suffrage sentiments.¹⁵⁶ At this convention, Marie Stuart Edwards of Peru, Indiana, won the election to replace Dr. Amelia Keller as the president of the Woman’s Franchise League of Indiana.¹⁵⁷ Edwards envisioned an “endless chain” of women reaching across the state in the name of suffrage.¹⁵⁸ Each woman would be responsible for canvassing an

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ “Franchise Session Will Turn Forces to Full Suffrage,” *Indianapolis Star*, April 8, 1917.

¹⁵⁵ “Change Opposed in Suffrage Work,” *Indianapolis Star*, April 3, 1917.

¹⁵⁶ “‘Endless Chain’ Plan To Be Used By City’s Women,” *Indianapolis Times*, March 21, 1917; “Record of Women Voters Planned,” *Indianapolis Times*, April 20, 1917; “Mrs. Edwards Urges Need of Organization,” *Indianapolis News*, April 20, 1917; Report of the Sixth Annual Woman’s Franchise League Convention, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 2, Folder 1, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

¹⁵⁷ Report of the Sixth Annual Woman’s Franchise League Convention, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 2, Folder 1, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

¹⁵⁸ “‘Endless Chain’ Plan To Be Used By City’s Women,” *Indianapolis Times*, March 21, 1917.

area near her home.¹⁵⁹ With the Franchise League wishing to contact every woman in the state, they needed many volunteers.¹⁶⁰ Edwards envisioned her plan as women getting to “air the babies around the block” while chatting about suffrage.¹⁶¹ This meant that women who thought they were too busy to be active in the canvassing efforts because they had children to tend should just take them along. Babies and children needed to go on walks, so why not walk them and talk to one’s neighbors about voting at the same time?¹⁶² While circumventing an excuse women were bound to make, Edwards also maintained the image earlier suffragists had utilized—mothers asking for the vote, exercising their political rights, and taking care of their children at the same time. This combated the arguments of anti-suffragists that the vote would make women less feminine and also make them ineffective homemakers.

Subscribing to society’s gender expectations only served to help suffragists’ image in the Hoosier state. The *Indianapolis News* lauded suffragist Cora Harris for her field work educating southern Indiana citizens about the virtues of voting. Harris moved to Indianapolis after her marriage but she kept her identity as a “daughter of the hills.”¹⁶³ When she encountered negative reactions to her campaign, Harris used her motherly qualities to quell any displeasure. She worked with women in their kitchens, washing dishes and cooking so as to not interrupt their daily chores as they discussed suffrage.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ Ibid.

¹⁶⁰ “‘Endless Chain’ Plan To Be Used By City’s Women,” *Indianapolis Times*, March 21, 1917; “Record of Women Voters Planned,” *Indianapolis Times*, April 20, 1917; “Mrs. Edwards Urges Need of Organization,” *Indianapolis News*, April 20, 1917.

¹⁶¹ “Mrs. Edwards Urges Need of Organization,” *Indianapolis News*, April 20, 1917; Helen Ernestinoff, “Women Discuss Broader Fields,” *Indianapolis Star*, April 19, 1917. This plan is described in multiple articles.

¹⁶² Ibid.

¹⁶³ “Carries Suffrage to Southern Indiana Hills,” *Indianapolis News*, July 7, 1917.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

This emphasis by the Franchise League on babies and womanly duties resonated well in the more conservative and rural parts of the state.

Some women sought enfranchisement to secure the respect and collaboration they needed from politicians. Women like Albion Fellows Bacon never considered themselves suffragists, but rather reformers who needed the vote to promote other measures.¹⁶⁵

Bacon, however, kept in close contact with Luella McWhirter and the Legislative Council of Indiana Women, while keeping an eye on the suffrage bills.¹⁶⁶ She, and others, saw the ballot as a tool for reform. An article in the *Indianapolis Times* that mirrored this sentiment read: “From this time on the women, armed with the ballot, will be more than ever effective in getting legislation.”¹⁶⁷ The power of the ballot as a reform tool made the argument for women’s moral superiority especially strong in Indiana and in other traditionalist states. In New York City, Mrs. Raymond Robbins of Illinois addressed a women’s meeting including a number of leading Hoosier suffragists. She spoke about the value of the ballot as an educational and reform tool to make women active political entities rather than idle gossipers.¹⁶⁸

The work of suffragists paid off. Throughout the summer of 1917 women registered to vote. The *Indianapolis News* reported that hundreds of women registered in small towns across the state. In the cities of Elkhart, Lafayette, Huntington, and Lebanon, over one thousand women in each city registered.¹⁶⁹ More than seven thousand women

¹⁶⁵ Barrows, *Albion Fellows Bacon*, 170. Bacon was an Indiana reformer who focused on housing and child welfare reform.

¹⁶⁶ Albion Fellows Bacon to Luella McWhirter, February 23, 1917, Luella McWhirter Papers, Box 6, Folder “Indiana Federation of Clubs,” Lilly Library, Bloomington, Indiana.

¹⁶⁷ “Indiana Women,” *Indianapolis Times*, March 6, 1917.

¹⁶⁸ Harriet Scanland, “Suffragists Meet in Gotham to Mark Recent Victories,” *Indianapolis Star*, April 1, 1917.

¹⁶⁹ “Thousands of Women Registered as Voters,” *Indianapolis News*, July 7, 1917.

reportedly registered in Richmond.¹⁷⁰ In southern and rural parts of Indiana, where Harris worked, women encountered more resistance to their efforts to register women to vote. On a special suffrage drive in rural Indiana, suffragists registered about 1,700 women with a house-to-house canvass. On this drive, canvassers met Rebecca Jane Simmons of Miami County, a ninety-three-year-old woman who eagerly registered to vote.¹⁷¹ She explained that it was her patriotic duty to vote, and she was glad to have lived to see the day when women were able to vote. She reported that her grandfather had fought in the Revolutionary War, her father had fought in the War of 1812, her husband had served in the Mexican War, and two of her sons had fought in the Civil War. One of her sons was killed in that war. And now, she had six grandsons in the military.¹⁷² Simmons' remarks made it clear that she believed women deserved a voice in a society where the people they cared for might have to give their lives in service to their county.

Simmons was not the only woman to reach back in history in order to promote the idea of women's long-standing patriotism. During times of war, women had always maintained the home front. They worked, gave up their men, and relinquished the basic comforts of life to preserve their nation. In a letter that appeared in the *Indianapolis News*, C.A. Robinson pointed out that American women had always been loyal to their country. She noted the efforts of women during the Civil War, and even connected Americans in the Civil War with the plight of European women during the Great War:

women who have faced a hundred worse hardships than those mentioned and every drop of their heart's blood was then, is now and ever will be of the truest patriotism; I am convinced their daughters and granddaughters

¹⁷⁰ "Many Women Qualify in 'Pocket' Counties," *Indianapolis News*, July 10, 1917. Richmond was the area of the state that was most populated with Quakers. Quakers believed in the equality of the sexes and it was Quaker women who led the early suffrage movement in Indiana.

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

are as loyally true to the old flag as were their patient, lonely maternal ancestors in the olden days of the dark and bloody war in our own country. Tell me anything else, but do not tell me the American woman is no patriot.¹⁷³

While Robinson did not explicitly state that women's efforts for their nation should be rewarded with the vote, suffragists capitalized on these kinds of sentiments.¹⁷⁴ More radical suffragists emphasized the expectation that for their efforts during World War I women should be enfranchised.¹⁷⁵ Most organizations simply implied that it was the duty of citizens to help in times of war and that women could gain support from the nation's men for doing their part.

The leaders of the National Woman's Party, the radical suffrage group advancing equality and not feminine virtue as the reason women should be enfranchised, believed that the war could be used in their favor. They stated "it is believed by some that great pressure brought to bear upon Congress may have quick returns now and favorable to the women's cause."¹⁷⁶ This kind of direct engagement did not correlate with conventional womanly behavior. The National Woman's Party, founded by women who had trained in England in a more radical method of asking for the vote, differed in their beliefs and tactics from Indiana's most popular suffrage organization, the National American Woman Suffrage Association (NAWSA).¹⁷⁷ In an Associated Press story that ran in the *Indianapolis News*, Christabel Pankhurst, a British suffrage leader respected by the Woman's Party, reflected on the situation in America by commenting that the "chivalrous American man will not overlook the sacrifices of the women in war time and he will

¹⁷³ "Civil War Recalled to Prove American Women's Patriotism," *Indianapolis Star*, March 7, 1917.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid.

¹⁷⁶ "Woman's Party Has Busy Week," *Indianapolis Star*, April 16, 1917.

¹⁷⁷ For information on the National Woman's Party and the National American Woman Suffrage Association see Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 208-217; 269-285; Kraditor, *The Ideas of the Woman Suffrage Movement*, 1-13.

recognize the same as men in England are doing that women are bound to show the same wisdom and patriotism in the use of the ballot.”¹⁷⁸ Although more radical suffragists demanded the vote in this fashion, conservative suffragists also echoed the belief that suffrage would become a war measure.¹⁷⁹ Newspaper articles not written specifically on suffragists reflected upon the reciprocal relationship many saw between suffrage and the war.¹⁸⁰

No matter what caused the shift in viewpoints, whether it was the war, women’s educational efforts, or some other social factor, according to the *Indianapolis Star* most people believed that woman’s total suffrage would be included in Indiana’s new constitution. The question remained whether that right would be written into the text of the document or if it would be an amendment to be put before the voters of the state.¹⁸¹ Indiana women had a unique opportunity in their bid for full enfranchisement because women had the right to help elect the constitutional convention delegates who would write the new constitution. Women would have the opportunity to research delegates and elect people who would support full enfranchisement for women.

Seemingly only the logistics of allowing women to vote needed to be ironed out, and then full enfranchisement seemed certain; however, accommodating women’s new right caused some problems. Voting machines took nearly a minute to process each vote. The polls operated for twelve hours on election day, meaning about 720 people could vote per day in any given precinct. A number of precincts already serviced 600-700 men. Additional precincts would be required in order to meet the needs of women voters,

¹⁷⁸ “War Great Stimulus for American Women,” *Indianapolis News*, June 6, 1917.

¹⁷⁹ “Franchise League Starts Tour of State,” *Indianapolis News*, June 5, 1917.

¹⁸⁰ “President Plans to Urge Suffrage” *Indianapolis Times*, May 18, 1917.

¹⁸¹ “Women Encountering Politics,” *Indianapolis Star*, April 10, 1917.

which people believed would nearly double the number of voters.¹⁸² With 1200 to 1400 people per precinct, not everyone could vote without increasing the number of polls and machines available.¹⁸³ Additionally, some polling stations were not placed in spaces seen as acceptable for women to enter. The City Clerk, Thomas A. Riley, proposed more precincts in order to accommodate an increased number of voters.¹⁸⁴ In other states that allowed women to vote, women cast their ballots at separate polling stations, but Indiana officials reported that having separate stations proved “too expensive as it entails the employment of a separate set of election officials.”¹⁸⁵ The decision was made during an interpretation of the law that was delivered to Governor Goodrich to increase the number of voting machines at each polling station, and if necessary, to have a separate entrance for women who entered the polling station. The state would not open any new polling stations.¹⁸⁶

During the summer of 1917, some women in some small governmental units across the state cast ballots in special elections to decide whether or not to turn towns dry before the prohibition bill went into effect in April 1918. For example, in Washington Township near Williamsport, Indiana, 325 women and 377 men voted in a liquor election. Two-hundred and five of those men voted for prohibition as well as 310 women, while 172 men voted for liquor compared to the 15 women who voted to keep the township wet.¹⁸⁷ These elections validated liquor interests’ fear that when given the

¹⁸² “Women Compel Small Precincts,” *Indianapolis Star*, March 20, 1917.

¹⁸³ Ibid.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ “Separate Count of Vote Decided,” *Indianapolis Star*, April 3, 1917.

¹⁸⁷ “Indiana Women Help Oust Liquor Traffic,” *Indianapolis News*, June 6, 1917; “Wheatfield Women Vote Against Saloons,” *Indianapolis News*, May 30, 1917. In Wheatfield, women also voted primarily for prohibition and their votes turned the town dry because the majority of men voted for liquor. However, women voted illegally before the waiting period for the partial suffrage act had passed.

chance, women would overwhelmingly vote against alcohol. These small town elections also demonstrated that it was not just urban women who were exercising their newly gained right, but rural women as well.

The three Indianapolis newspapers did not provide much coverage on working-class women's involvement in the suffrage movement. However, the effort to engage working women in political activities demonstrated that working-class women showed an interest in their right to vote. Or, at least, middle-class and upper-class women tried to encourage working-class women to vote. The Business Woman's Franchise League and the Chamber of Commerce in Indianapolis hosted events for women voters, "especially those employed in factories and shops . . . [who] have not yet joined the league."¹⁸⁸ This, of course, implies that some factory and shop workers had already joined the organization. When it came to describing the scene at registration stations throughout the city, the *Indianapolis Star* reported that "[w]ealthy women rub[bed] elbows with the washerwoman in hurrying to register. Truly the registration room [wa]s the melting pot of the women of the city."¹⁸⁹ If only a few working-class women appeared at the registration station their presence would likely have gone unmentioned, as very rarely did the *Indianapolis Star* mention anything about women outside of the wealthier classes.

The passage of the partial suffrage act also did not escape the notice of Mary Etta Kaser, an elderly, impoverished widow who lived in Indianapolis. In a letter to her daughter, Kaser demonstrated her awareness of the passage of the law. Kaser's letters usually emphasized personal topics. She wrote about her own failing health, the news of the neighborhood, and demanded that her daughter write her more often. Kaser wrote the

¹⁸⁸ "Franchise League Plans to Organize Shop Women Voters," *Indianapolis Times*, March 23, 1917.

¹⁸⁹ "More than 90,000 Voters Recorded," *Indianapolis Star*, October 5, 1917.

“suffrage bill has passed women can vote and they haft [sic] to pay poll taxes to [sic] now. So we are like men.”¹⁹⁰ It was either a mocking reference or a celebratory one. Regardless, for this widow to have mentioned the vote in her letter, it must have been a noteworthy event!

The Woman’s Franchise League of Indiana specifically targeted women like Mary Etta Kaser. It was the reason the organization needed the “endless chain.”¹⁹¹ At the Sixth Annual Convention of the Franchise League on April 17, 1917, members discussed possible ways to attract voters from all walks of life. As newspapers outlined, there were canvassing plans in place. However, some women were concerned about their ability to speak with non-English speaking women. The minutes of the meeting noted that 10 to 15 percent of Indiana residents were foreign born. The leaders of the Franchise League attempted to enlist a woman who could speak the language of the people and knew the customs to canvass areas with high immigrant populations. Even if women were not naturalized, the committee still wished to speak with them because they might be interested in citizenship, at which point they would legally be able to cast a ballot. Mrs. Wilbur Templin of Elkhart declared at the Franchise League annual conference, “I do not think that we should pass anybody over.”¹⁹²

However, despite the talk of inclusivity, one group of women were often left out of the conversation. While the Franchise League’s interest in foreign-born women was evident, there was no mention of African American women. However, African American

¹⁹⁰ Mary Etta Kaser to Daughter, February 26, 1917, Mary Etta Kaser Papers, Box 1, Folder 1, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

¹⁹¹ “‘Endless Chain’ Plan To Be Used By City’s Women,” *Indianapolis Times*, March 21, 1917; “Record of Women Voters Planned,” *Indianapolis Times*, April 20, 1917; “Mrs. Edwards Urges Need of Organization,” *Indianapolis News*, April 20, 1917.

¹⁹² “Constitutional Convention Conference,” League of Women Voters Papers, Box 2, Folder 1, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

women had their own separate organizations to promote suffrage. Some of the clubs included the Fourth Ward League of North Indianapolis, the Women's Advance Franchise League, Colored Women's Republican Club, the Woman's Suffrage League of the Second Baptist Church, and the Woman's Suffrage Club of Irvington.¹⁹³ These clubs spread the word about women's new right and attempted to convince African American women that their votes could make a difference. At this time the number of African American residents in Indianapolis grew as many people from the South moved to northern cities searching for employment.¹⁹⁴ In an article in the *Indianapolis News*, Frances Berry Coston urged that "colored people should be awakened to their own needs and should use their political influence in the direction that will at least work them no harm . . . The woman in whom we should be mostly concerned for the next months is the ones who has neither the time nor the inclination to listen to a discussion on the Constitution."¹⁹⁵ Another barrier that African American suffragists sought to overcome while getting women to the polls must have been convincing African American women that the polls were a safe place to go. While widespread racial violence was not reported in the papers, there had been some instances of deceit and violence against African American men in past elections.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹³ Frances Berry Coston, "Colored Women Study Problem of Suffrage," *Indianapolis News*, June 6, 1917. No records for these clubs were found.

¹⁹⁴ Phillips, *Indiana in Transition*, 370-371.

¹⁹⁵ Frances Berry Coston, "Colored Women Study Problem of Suffrage," *Indianapolis News*, June 6, 1917.

¹⁹⁶ "Tell How They Did Not Obtain A Vote," *Indianapolis News*, June 16, 1917. A court case heard before the federal court in June of 1917 concerned Samuel V. Perrott, Chief of Police of Indianapolis, and six other men (including various police officers). Tom Harris, an African American man, was targeted and attacked for attempting to vote. City Detective William Feeney allegedly organized a gang and drove to the polling station where Harris worked to get him away from the polls. Luckily, Harris was tipped off that this "gang" was coming and left before an altercation. Numerous men also gave their testimony about not being allowed to register to vote, being threatened for trying to enter the place of registration, or being deceived only to find out on election day that their registration had not been valid. Beyond these threats and trickery, one man was assaulted at the polls. Additionally, in the primary held in March 1917, the *Indianapolis Times* made a number of racist comments in charging poll workers with cheating so that Charles Jewett

All women voters in Indiana feared legal action would keep them from the polls. Most other suffrage states had their legislative acts tested in court; therefore, Hoosier women saw it as just a matter of time before the Indiana law was challenged. Ever since the bill had passed the legislature, women acknowledged this possibility with articles citing judicial victories in favor of women in other states.¹⁹⁷ The first rumor of a court case appeared in the *Indianapolis Star* on April 10, 1917.¹⁹⁸ The rumored lawsuit was supposed to question the bill on its constitutional validity as the bill included the purported words “[i]n all elections not otherwise provided for by this constitution.”¹⁹⁹ The complainants argued that the wording of the law and the Constitution demonstrated that the legislature had no right to enfranchise women. The Indiana Constitution stated male citizens could vote and made no mention of female citizens. Moreover, the case was rumored to attack the preferential treatment given native-born women. According to the newspaper, the lawsuit would be filed on the grounds that it was questionable to “exclude those born in a foreign country from exercising the right of franchise and permitting native-born women to vote.”²⁰⁰ While these rumors appeared in the *Indianapolis Star*, no lawsuit materialized. However, this rumor set suffragists on the path to prepare for a coming legal storm.²⁰¹

would win the primary. Therefore, racial tensions remained in 1917 polling stations. “News-Jewett Crowd Blamed for Raw Deal,” *Indianapolis Times*, March 5, 1917.

¹⁹⁷ “Many Court Tests Uphold Legality of Women’s Vote for Presidential Electors,” *Indianapolis Times*, March 15, 1917.

¹⁹⁸ “Suffrage Test in Court Soon,” *Indianapolis Star*, April 10, 1917.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰⁰ Ibid. The wording of the bill was “every woman who is a citizen of the United States.” This differed from the rights of male alien residents of Indiana could vote after declaring their intention to become citizens. Women had to officially become citizens before they could cast ballots. Laws at the time also stripped women of their citizenship if they married an alien. Upon the husband’s death the woman would regain her citizenship. This provision endorsed the legal concept of coverture. “Separate Count of Vote Decided,” *Indianapolis Star*, April 3, 1917.

²⁰¹ “Woman Suffrage Law Under Investigation,” *Indianapolis News*, May 24, 1917.

Chapter 3: Legal Battle

In May 1917, Henry W. Bennett filed the first official test suit, as opposed to the previously rumored suit, questioning the constitutionality of calling for a constitutional convention without the consent of the people. As a secondary concern, he questioned the legitimacy of women as voters. The Marion County Superior Court heard the case in late June 1917 and ruled partial suffrage violated Article II, Section 2 of the Indiana constitution, but the constitutional convention act stood.²⁰² Bennett appealed to the Indiana Supreme Court which rendered a decision on July 13, 1917, stating that the constitutional convention act violated Indiana's constitution.²⁰³ The Indiana Supreme Court refused to rule on woman's suffrage.²⁰⁴ This decision spurred William W. Knight to file a lawsuit against the Board of Election Commissioners of the City of Indianapolis to settle the question of whether women could vote in Indiana.²⁰⁵ As a result, Indiana Supreme Court affirmed that partial woman's suffrage violated the state constitution and officially stripped women of their enfranchisement on October 26, 1917.²⁰⁶ The events ultimately disenfranchised Hoosier women in late 1917 caused some women to modify their pro-suffrage tactics; however, as a whole, they remained true to their conservative approach to gain the vote.²⁰⁷

The Woman's Franchise League of Indiana sought legal representation as early as April 1917, when the first rumor spread that someone had filed a lawsuit to question

²⁰² *Bennett v. Jackson*, 186 Ind. 533, 116 N.E. 921, 922 (Ind. 1917).

²⁰³ *Ibid.*, 923.

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁵ See *Knight*, 187 Ind. 108, 117 N.E. 565.

²⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, 571.

²⁰⁷ The files of this case, both at the trial court and appellate level, are in inaccessible archival storage at the Indiana State Archives. There are five skids with about forty boxes of court cases per skid that are unorganized and not cataloged. However, other sources allowed me to analyze these events.

woman's suffrage.²⁰⁸ Allison Stuart, the brother of Franchise League President Marie Stuart Edwards, was a lawyer in Lafayette, Indiana. In April and May, when the Indianapolis newspapers reported that a lawsuit was being prepared to test the partial suffrage law, Edwards sought legal counsel from her brother. Through letters and Western Union telegrams from Peru, Indiana, fifty-five miles from her brother's office in Lafayette, Edwards confessed her fears that the act would be challenged as similar suffrage laws had been challenged across the United States. Stuart replied to his sister that he had "grave doubts as to the constitutionality of the suffrage bill."²⁰⁹ He also reminded her that in a previous conversation he had told her to pin her hopes on the new constitution rather than any legislative act.²¹⁰

Although Stuart's foreboding letter about the legality of suffrage proved to be true, he failed to predict that the lawsuit in the spring of 1917 would question the constitutional convention act and featured woman's suffrage only as a secondary concern. When he discovered this fact, Stuart quickly penned a short note to his sister on May 2, 1917, to inform her that the constitutional convention law, and not the partial suffrage act, was the focus of a newly filed lawsuit.²¹¹ Henry Bennett, a local businessman and president of the Indianapolis Stove Company, sued Secretary of State Ed Jackson on the

²⁰⁸ "Suffrage Test in Court Soon," *Indianapolis Star*, April 10, 1917.

²⁰⁹ Allison Stuart to Marie Edwards, April 23, 1917, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 1, Folder 5, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

²¹⁰ Ibid.

²¹¹ Stuart also hastily scribbled the legal gossip to his sister, including the possible revocation of the prohibition law because the state needed money and the alcohol tax provided a decent revenue stream. Allison Stuart to Marie Stuart Edwards, May 2, 1917, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 1, Folder 5, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis; Allison Stuart to Marie Stuart Edwards, May 8, 1917, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 1, Folder 5, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis. The prohibition law was contested in a lawsuit in Evansville. Springer, "Ladylike Reformers: Indiana Women and Progressive Reform, 1900-1920," 207-208.

grounds that he did not have the authority to approve the constitutional convention act.²¹²

Even though the partial suffrage act was not the sole or main target, Edwards became actively involved in selecting and hiring the legal counsel to assist the Attorney General in representing Secretary of State Jackson.²¹³ Edwards used her brother as an informal legal liaison and hired Abram Simmons, a respected pro-suffrage lawyer in Indianapolis, to represent the suffragists' interests in court.²¹⁴

Henry Bennett filed the lawsuit because he believed the convention was a pointless expense for taxpayers. The brief estimated that for Indiana's 3,120 precincts to hold a special election for delegates to a constitutional convention and to compensate the attendants of the convention, the state would pay no less than \$500,000.²¹⁵ Bennett's lawyer, Charles Martindale, declared that the General Assembly had no legislative authority to call for a constitutional convention as that request had to originate from the people of Indiana. The brief referenced the failed 1914 referendum when the legislature had tried to obtain Hoosiers' permission to write a new constitution. A total of 235,140 men voted in 1914 for a new constitution; however, 338,947 voters cast their ballots against the notion. As 792,625 Hoosiers met the voting requirements, Martindale reasoned the voter turnout and response indicated the feelings of the residents of Indiana.

Since that vote in 1914, there had been no effort to see how the people of Indiana felt

²¹² *Bennett*, 186 Ind. 533, 116 N.E. 921, 921-922. For more information on Henry Bennett see *Men of Indiana in Nineteen Hundred and One* (Indianapolis: The Benesch Publishing Company, 1901), 115.

²¹³ Abram Simmons to Marie Stuart Edwards, May 9, 1917, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 1, Folders 5, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

²¹⁴ Stuart did not want to represent the Women's Franchise League in court. He told his sister he felt he did not have the experience to adequately represent them; however, on April 23, 1917, he told his sister he felt the Partial Suffrage Act was unconstitutional and that may have played into his decision. After the Marion County Superior Court ruled in *Bennett v. Jackson* that the Partial Suffrage Act was invalid and that women would not be able to vote, Allison Stuart continued to be active in the case. He sought to ensure that women continued to register for the Constitutional Convention election just in case the Indiana Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of both acts. Allison Stuart to Abram Simmons, May 14, 1917, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 1, Folder 5, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

²¹⁵ Brief of the Petitioner at 83, *Bennett v. Jackson*, No. 23,330 (Marion Cty. Sup. Ct. May 2, 1917).

about calling for a new state constitution.²¹⁶ In spite of this argument, Judge William Wheeler Thornton of the Marion County Superior Court ruled against Bennett.

Judge Thornton decided there was no issue before the court because Bennett had no standing to sue the Secretary of State or any of the other defendants. He declared, however, that the partial suffrage act was invalid because of the “lack of power vested in the Seventieth General Assembly of the State of Indiana to enact the same, and because the same is repugnant to and in violation of Section 2 of Article II of the present constitution of the State of Indiana.”²¹⁷ As Bennett’s major complaint was not about woman’s suffrage, but rather the constitutional convention act, Bennett took an appeal directly to the Indiana Supreme Court, arguing that the trial court erred in all of its conclusions with the exception of the women voters’ clause. With a bond of \$250, the Supreme Court accepted the case.²¹⁸

Thornton’s ruling on suffrage led to a discussion about the constitutionality of that particular question. Lawyers, like the general population, debated whether suffrage was a natural or a civil right. Ironically, at this stage, Hoosier suffragists’ argument for voting ultimately hurt their bid for enfranchisement. Women in Indiana utilized a conservative approach of touting women’s inherent differences from men as the major reason they needed the vote. That argument did not fare well in the courts. Because women continually emphasized their unique traits, they had trouble claiming that suffrage was a natural right.²¹⁹ Secretary of State Jackson’s lawyers argued that voting was a political right and did not utilize any of the gendered rationale with which women had

²¹⁶ Ibid. at 3-4.

²¹⁷ Ibid. at 8-11.

²¹⁸ Brief of the Appellant at 11-12, *Bennett*, 186 Ind. 533, 116 N.E. 921 (No. 23,330).

²¹⁹ Brief of the Appellee at 217-219.

campaigned.²²⁰ His lawyers also argued that women became valid citizens with the end of coverture and the growth of property rights.²²¹ Both of these advancements ended the “disabilities and dependency” argument that previously had been used to argue against women as able voters.²²² Given that women now had more rights and obligations, the argument shifted into the notion that women should be allowed to vote.²²³

Some women spilled their anger onto the printed page regarding Judge Thornton’s decision. He received one acerbic letter from the Lafayette branch of the Franchise League which stated that Thornton’s decision actually helped suffragists light “the match we needed to kindle the fire of enthusiasm.”²²⁴ The local branch warned Thornton that since he issued a verdict that women could not vote, women would only want it more. Using a biblical allusion to Eve in the Garden of Eden taking the apple she was told not to touch, the letter cautioned “Eve’s great grand-children haven’t changed much it seems. So we thank you.”²²⁵ In the opinion of the Lafayette branch, Thornton’s verdict against suffrage would result in a greater number of women joining the ranks of suffragists. The offended Judge Thornton enclosed a copy of the letter along with a note about his own pro-suffrage leaning to Marie Stuart Edwards. He informed Edwards that his wife was a suffragist; therefore, he supported the cause, but Thornton asserted he had no choice in his ruling because he could not allow his personal bias to affect his decision.

²²⁰ Ibid. at 134.

²²¹ Linda Kerber defines coverture in that it “transferred a woman’s civic identity to her husband at marriage, giving him use and direction of her property throughout the marriage.” Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to be Ladies*, 11-12.

²²² Brief of Appellee at 136, *Bennett*, 186 Ind. 533, 116 N.E. 921 (No. 23,330).

²²³ According to historian Joan Hoff, women were transitioning from a period of constitutional discrimination to constitutional protection. Hoff, *Law, Gender and Injustice: A Legal History of U.S. Women*, 193.

²²⁴ Caroline B. Morrison to Judge Thornton, June 29, 1917, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 2, Folder 6, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

²²⁵ Ibid.

He added that the newspapers had misrepresented his feelings and the reasoning behind his verdict.²²⁶

In her response, Edwards assured Thornton that the state league felt no hostility towards him and that she did not condone the Lafayette letter. She wrote, “I beg you to believe that we are not in sympathy with heckling judges any more than we are in sympathy with picketing the White House.”²²⁷ This reassurance demonstrated the same kind of conservative argument that Hoosier suffragists had tried to maintain throughout their campaign.

In the end, the women’s efforts proved futile. The Indiana Supreme Court overturned Judge Thornton’s decision and voided the constitutional convention act. However, the Court refused to issue a decision on the entirety of the partial suffrage act but noted that women were not allowed to vote in the constitutional convention election, as there would not be a constitutional convention.²²⁸ The Court also decided against Secretary of State Jackson due to failure to follow proper procedures. The State had the power to rewrite its constitution, but the proper steps to commence the process had been neglected as the request had to originate and be confirmed by the people. Judge Richard Erwin penned the majority opinion and wrote that the voters must be asked for permission before the legislature could amend a constitution. Erwin noted that the last time the legislature asked Hoosiers about a new constitution the measure was defeated handily; they would need to be asked again before a convention could be held.²²⁹

²²⁶ Judge Thornton to Marie Stuart Edwards, July 25, 1917, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 2, Folder 6, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

²²⁷ Marie Stuart Edwards to Judge Thornton, July 30, 1917, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 2, Folder 6, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

²²⁸ *Bennett*, 186 Ind. 533, 116 N.E. 921, 923-924.

²²⁹ *Ibid.*

Justice Moses Lairy dissented, and in his opinion, stated that although voters have to consent to revisions of a constitution, the legislature represented the people. Lairy pointed out that the Indiana Constitution did not have any provision outlining how a constitutional convention could be called; starting in the legislature was one option. The Indiana Supreme Court decision in *Bennett* meant women lost the prospect of putting full suffrage into the state constitution through a constitutional convention.²³⁰

Hoosiers received the *Bennett* decision with mixed emotions. For example, one article in the *Indianapolis Times* declared women's ultimate victory was just around the corner, especially since the United States was engaged in a war for human rights and democracy. The author wrote: "It was not to be expected that old fogysm and antiquated tyranny would give up without struggling."²³¹ Minor setbacks would not defeat the ultimate goal. However, as the Court did not rule on the partial suffrage act, women still had the right to vote in specific elections. The *Indianapolis News* quoted the president of the Legislative Counsel of Indiana Women, Luella McWhirter, who proclaimed that women would take this opportunity to demonstrate "their knowledge of political science and their interests in everything that pertains to the home. They are thoroughly aroused."²³² According to a later *Indianapolis News* article, suffragists theorized that once women proved their aptitude for voting, full voting rights were bound to follow quickly even if the state would not have a constitutional convention in 1917. Therefore, McWhirter urged Governor Goodrich to call a special election in order to get the consent of the people for a new constitution.²³³

²³⁰ Ibid. at 922-923.

²³¹ "Women Get Rights," *Indianapolis Times*, June 30, 1917.

²³² "Constitutional Convention Law is Held Invalid," *Indianapolis News*, July 13, 1917.

²³³ "Women Ask Governor to Call Special Election," *Indianapolis News*, July 23, 1917.

Due to the ambiguous Indiana Supreme Court ruling on suffrage in *Bennett*, on August 9, 1917, William White Knight filed a lawsuit with the Marion County Superior Court testing the validity of the partial suffrage act on the grounds that as a taxpayer in Indiana the passage of this legislation hurt him.²³⁴ Suffragists at the time questioned why Knight was an anti-suffragist, and in their newsletter, the *Hoosier Suffragist*, reported rumors that he was a Republican. They subsequently declared “[w]e don’t pretend to know, except in a general way, what forces are behind the attempt to have the suffrage law declared unconstitutional.”²³⁵ Like Henry Bennett before him, Knight cited the cost of ballots, registration forms, additional polling stations, and other necessary voting apparatus as costing the state undue tax dollars and therefore injuring him as a taxpayer. Knight’s lawyers, George H. Batchelor and former Supreme Court Justice Charles E. Cox, contended that the act was unconstitutional given Article II Section 2 of the Indiana Constitution.²³⁶

²³⁴ William W. Knight was born in Philadelphia on May 8, 1862. He began working in the lumber trade as a boy. In 1888, he came to Indianapolis and began working for Henry C. Long. In 1898, the two organized the Long-Knight Lumber Company, which was incorporated for \$20,000, and Knight served as the president and treasurer. Seemingly, Long provided the funds for this venture, but died in 1902. The company dissolved in 1920. Knight was a Republican, an Episcopalian, and married twice. His first marriage was to Gertrude Jordan, the daughter of Judge Lewis Jordan. The second was to a Pennsylvanian named Ethlyn. It seems strange for Knight to bring this suit as he did not seem to have the financial means to do so. Even at the time, he remained a mysterious figure and therefore was perhaps merely the face of the lawsuit while a much wealthier and powerful force truly drove it. For more information on Knight’s life see: Jacob Piatt Dunn, *Greater Indianapolis: The History, the Industries, the Institutions, and the People of a City of Homes* (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co, 1910), 1044; Bureau of the Census, *1910 Census of Population and Housing: Indiana*, Washington, D.C.: Bureau of the Census; Long-Knight Lumber Co. Papers, Corporate Records, Indiana State Archives, Commission on Public Records, Indianapolis.

²³⁵ This quote hints that the women believed Knight served as a front for someone else. “Politics and the Suffrage Suit,” *The Hoosier Suffragist*, August 22, 1917, p. 2.

²³⁶ Charles Cox is an especially intriguing figure. He served as a Supreme Court justice from 1911 to 1916, when he lost his bid for re-election. He was a Democrat and was known for his knowledge of the Constitution. It appeared he called a number of the actions of the 1917 legislature into question over their constitutionality. “Vote Challenged by Charles E. Cox,” *Indianapolis Times*, January 9, 1917. Ryan T. Schwier, “Charles E. Cox” in *Justices of the Indiana Supreme Court*, ed. Linda C. Gugin and James E. St. Clair (Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society Press, 2010), 219-222.

As lawyers argued the case before the trial court, the leaders of Indiana suffrage organizations crowded the courtroom carrying the usual suffragist courtroom accessories of knitting needles and yarn.²³⁷ Attorney General Ele Stansbury, Abram Simmons, U.G. Lesh, Emma Eaton White, W.W. Spencer, Catharine McCulloch and a few other supporting attorneys defended the Board of Election Commissioners of the City of Indianapolis. They first questioned whether the Marion County Superior Court had jurisdiction to rule on this case.²³⁸ The court quickly decided that it had jurisdiction.²³⁹ The court then proceeded to answer whether the legislature had the power to enfranchise women. Knight often cited Article II, Section 2 of the Indiana Constitution to claim that the legislature did not have the right to extend the voter base.²⁴⁰ The clause in its entirety reads:

In all elections not otherwise provided for by this constitution, every male citizen of the United States, of the age of twenty-one years and upwards, who shall have resided in the state during the six months, and in the township sixty days, and in the ward or precinct thirty days, immediately preceding such election, and every male of foreign birth, of the age of twenty-one years and upwards, who shall have resided in the United States one year, and shall have resided in this state during the six months, and in the township sixty days, and in the ward or precinct thirty days, immediately preceding such election, and shall have declared his intention to become a citizen of the United States, conformably to the laws of the United States on the subject of naturalization, shall be entitled to vote in the township or precinct where he may reside, if he shall have been duly registered according to law.²⁴¹

Knight's lawyers stated that the General Assembly did not have the right to extend its voter base and "in the absence of express constitutional grant, to define the electorate, the

²³⁷ Suffragists typically brought knitting supplies with them enabling them to demonstrate they could complete their housework while also keeping abreast of the suffrage case. "Vote Arguments May End Today," *Indianapolis Star*, August 21, 1917.

²³⁸ Brief of Respondent at 11, *Knight v. Bd. of Election Commr's of City of Indianapolis*, No. 73, 755 (Marion Cty. Sup. Ct. August 9, 1917).

²³⁹ *Bd. of Election Commr's of City of Indianapolis v. Knight*, 187 Ind. 108, 117 N.E. 565, 566 (Ind. 1917).

²⁴⁰ "Suffrage Suit Hearing Ends," *Indianapolis Star*, October 11, 1917.

²⁴¹ Constitution of Indiana, Article II, Section 2.

absence of prohibition in that respect cannot by implication confer the power.”²⁴² The pro-suffrage lawyers representing the Board of Election Commissioners tried to defend the act with examples of other states upholding their suffrage laws in court. But Knight urged the court to disregard all examples from other states because this case relied on the Indiana Constitution. Knight also stressed that while the legislature had the power to create appointive or elective offices and to set elections, the Indiana Constitution defined electors.²⁴³

The pro-suffrage lawyers claimed that Article II, Section 2 of the Indiana Constitution was not relevant because the partial suffrage act only gave women the right to vote for offices not mentioned in the Constitution. To prove that the General Assembly had the power to permit women to vote for these positions, they cited Article VI, Section 3, which stipulated “[s]uch other county and township officers as may be necessary shall be elected or appointed in such manner as may be prescribed by law.”²⁴⁴ They also quoted Article XV, Section 1 that stated “[a]ll officers whose appointments are not otherwise provided for in this constitution shall be chosen in such manner as now is, or hereafter may be, prescribed by law.”²⁴⁵ The lawyers argued that these sections of the constitution allowed the legislature to permit women to vote for offices created by the legislature. They argued that Article II, Section 5 explicitly denied suffrage to African Americans; there was no such clause explicitly denying suffrage based upon sex.²⁴⁶ Article II, Section 2 was worded as a positive mandate, meaning suffrage could not be

²⁴² Brief of Petitioner at 7, *Knight v. Bd. of Election Commr's of City of Indianapolis*, No. 73, 755 (Marion Cty. Sup. Ct. August 9, 1917).

²⁴³ *Ibid.* at 40-45.

²⁴⁴ Brief of Respondent at 13, *Knight v. Bd. of Election Commr's of City of Indianapolis*, No. 73, 755 (Marion Cty. Sup. Ct. August 9, 1917).

²⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁶ This section was abrogated by the Fifteenth Amendment to the United States Constitution. *Ibid.* at 15.

denied to adult men. To interpret it as a negative mandate prohibiting women from voting “requires construction where none is necessary, interpretation where there is no ambiguity, and results in judicial legislation.”²⁴⁷ Since Article II, Section 5 of the Indiana Constitution specifically prohibited one group of people from voting, the logic of the pro-suffrage attorneys was that if another group was to be expressly kept from voting, the writers of the original Constitution would have penned another negative mandate concerning the group.

Knight’s lawyers referred often to *Gougar v. Timberlake*.²⁴⁸ Helen Gougar had tried to vote in 1894. The opening line of the decision read, “[t]he question in this case is, have women, under existing laws of this state, the privilege of suffrage.”²⁴⁹ The state found that women did not. However, as the Board of Election Commissioners’ attorney Catharine McCulloch argued, there was no enabling statute at the time of the decision.²⁵⁰ She went on to state that since the General Assembly had passed legislation in 1917 that gave women the vote, *Gougar* was irrelevant.²⁵¹ Knight’s lawyers used the *Gougar* decision to show “the right of suffrage cannot exist in the absence of grants from the people or their authorized representatives.”²⁵² As the partial suffrage act had not met the approval of the electorate, Knight’s attorneys argued it was invalid.

²⁴⁷ Brief of Respondent at 25, *Knight v. Bd. of Election Commr's of City of Indianapolis*, No. 73, 755 (Marion Cty. Sup. Ct. August 9, 1917).

²⁴⁸ Brief of Petitioner at 8, *Knight v. Bd. of Election Commr's of City of Indianapolis*, No. 73, 755 (Marion Cty. Sup. Ct. August 9, 1917), citing *Gougar v. Timberlake*, 148 Ind. 38, 46 N.E. 339 (Ind. 1897); Helen Gougar was a famous Hoosier lawyer. She was accepted to the Tippecanoe County Bar on January 10, 1894, and that afternoon argued for suffrage. Robert C. Kriebel, *Where the Saints Have Trod: The Life of Helen Gougar* (West Lafayette, IN: Purdue University Press, 1985), 153-154.

²⁴⁹ *Gougar*, 148 N.E. 38, 46 N.E. 339.

²⁵⁰ McCulloch was a lawyer from Chicago who helped to receive a favorable ruling in the Illinois Partial Suffrage Law in 1913. Buechler, *The Transformation of the Woman Suffrage Movement: The Case of Illinois, 1850-1920*, 76-178.

²⁵¹ Brief of Petitioner at 9, *Knight v. Bd. of Election Commr's of City of Indianapolis*, No. 73, 755 (Marion Cty. Sup. Ct. August 9, 1917).

²⁵² *Ibid.* at 34.

Anti-suffragists also worried that women voters would outnumber male voters. The pro-suffrage lawyers declared that women voters in the City of Indianapolis could in no way outnumber men. In order to be eligible to vote, women had to be citizens of the United States, whereas men simply had to express their desire to be citizens in order to cast a ballot.²⁵³ Additionally, Illinois, Michigan, Nebraska, Kentucky, Oregon, Florida, Maryland, and Ohio, states that had permitted partial suffrage for women, had not found women voters outnumbering men voters.²⁵⁴

The case of Illinois was most captivating for many suffragists in Indiana.²⁵⁵ In *The Hoosier Suffragist*, the Franchise League explained that the Illinois Supreme Court had upheld partial suffrage, and as a result, Indiana women were confident of the legitimacy of their claim to partial voting rights. The mantra became “Illinois Did It.”²⁵⁶ However, after Judge Rochford’s decision for Knight in the Marion County Superior Court, the women changed their wording slightly to “[w]hat Illinois men did for the women of their state, surely the men of Indiana can do for us.”²⁵⁷ The gendered appeal and calling into question the manhood of Hoosiers compared to the men of Illinois, especially in a time of war, would have been quite a blow to the identity of anti-suffragists.

Indianapolis newspapers extensively covered Charles Cox’s oral arguments. He made the closing argument for Knight and attacked Indiana women’s patriotism by associating them with the White House picketers. Additionally, he expressed his belief

²⁵³ Ibid. at 23.

²⁵⁴ Ibid. at 40.

²⁵⁵ The Illinois Suffrage Law was similar to Indiana’s in that it granted women suffrage in all offices (municipal, township, school, and presidential) not mentioned in the state constitution. The court upheld its validity in 1913. Buechler, *The Transformation of the Woman Suffrage Movement*, 178.

²⁵⁶ “Illinois Did It,” *The Hoosier Suffragist*, August 22, 1917. *The Hoosier Suffragist* was the newsletter for the Woman’s Franchise League of Indiana.

²⁵⁷ “Judge Rochford’s Decision,” *The Hoosier Suffragist*, September 21, 1917.

that suffragists were not representative of the majority of women whom, he claimed, did not want the vote.²⁵⁸

Emma Eaton White's closing statement for the defense also made the local newspapers. White reiterated many of the sentiments previously stated by the lawyers, but also stated that the law was "being attacked by some interests who felt their political power may be lessened when the women vote and who are seeking to throw down the law under the cloak of respectability of the plaintiff in this case."²⁵⁹ After White, Stansbury made his closing argument. He said:

This law is a milestone in the history of Indiana and a milestone in the pathway of civilization. This case is so important that it will write good or bad into the history of the state. There is not one word in the Constitution which says that the legislature shall not have the right to grant the right of enfranchisement to the women of the state.²⁶⁰

As states around the nation granted women partial and full suffrage with increasing frequency, the Knight case had the opportunity to make or break Indiana's reputation as a progressive or a conservative state.

Judge Rochford of the Marion County Superior Court ruled on September 17, 1917, that since the qualifications of voters were clearly delineated in the Constitution as men, "the Legislature can neither add to, nor subtract from the designated persons."²⁶¹ The court believed that suffrage was not a matter that fell under statutory regulations, but rather fell under the jurisdiction of constitutional law.²⁶² The judge contended that the legal maxim "[t]hat which is expressed makes that which is silent ceases" supported the

²⁵⁸ "Cox Closes Argument in Part Suffrage Case," *Indianapolis News*, August 21, 1917.

²⁵⁹ "Cox Closes Argument in the Part Suffrage Case," *Indianapolis News*, August 21, 1917. The "cloak of respectability" phrasing again makes it seem like Knight was the front man for another man or group.

²⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁶¹ Opinion at 13, *Knight v. Bd. of Election Commr's of City of Indianapolis*, No. 73, 755 (Marion Cty. Sup. Ct. September 17, 1917).

²⁶² *Ibid.* at 15.

interpretation that the Indiana Constitution limited electors.²⁶³ In other words, because women were omitted from the clause that defined voters as men, women could not be voters.

The one right that the court was willing to give women was school suffrage. According to the court, the legislature had the explicit power to set the qualifications of school commission voters, but the wording of the bill that passed the House and Senate made it clear the intent of the law was not to merely give school suffrage. School suffrage was a small part of a whole entity, and it was questionable whether a stand-alone school suffrage bill would have been enacted. Consequently, the court struck down the entire partial suffrage act.²⁶⁴ Judge Rochford ruled that suffrage was not a right or even a signal of citizenship, but was a “privilege and possessed only by those to whom it is granted . . . there is no right of suffrage except as is given by the constitution and the written laws.”²⁶⁵ Rochford believed the Act passed by the General Assembly violated Article II, Section 2 of the Indiana Constitution.

After the Marion County Superior Court issued its decision in *Knight*, a number of women met in the home of Indianapolis suffrage leader, Mrs. John F. Barnhill. Since *Knight*’s primary complaint concerned the monetary burden on taxpayers, hundreds of “women taxpayers” circulated petitions and adopted a resolution that read:

Resolved, That we, representatives of the women taxpayers of Indianapolis, hereby record our conviction that the purposes of the said suit are unworthy of the honest manhood of this community and of the state; and, be it further

²⁶³ Ibid. at 26.

²⁶⁴ Ibid. at 41.

²⁶⁵ “Supreme Court Will Be Asked to Uphold Law,” *Indianapolis Star*, September 18, 1917.

Resolved, That we hereby, renew our pledge to continue without ceasing in the effort to have guaranteed by state and Federal amendments these rights for which our revolutionary fathers contended.²⁶⁶

John Lapp from the Legislative Information Bureau addressed the attendees and stated that all people were indirectly taxpayers and should be entitled to a voice in governmental affairs.²⁶⁷ The women also discussed their war effort as a reason for their immediate and full enfranchisement. They reasoned that the government could not deny them rights while requiring so much work from them. They thought that “[i]t is unworthy of the government and unjust and humiliating to women to accept their partnership in this great undertaking and at the same time continue to deny to them the political equality enjoyed by all other participants.”²⁶⁸ The expectation remained that American women should share a reciprocal relationship with their government.

Word reached Marie Stuart Edwards that women had lost when attorney Abram Simmons wrote, “I was at Indianapolis yesterday and met the enemy and for the present we are theirs.”²⁶⁹ But women remained hopeful and continued to register and prepare to vote. Suffragists appealed immediately after Rochford issued his decision, although the process took a few days. If a successful appeal and decision did not occur quickly, women in Indianapolis would not be able to vote in the November election. As the Marion County Superior Court handed down its ruling, women in other counties would

²⁶⁶ “Women Attack Suffrage Suit,” *Indianapolis Star*, September 5, 1917.

²⁶⁷ Ibid.

²⁶⁸ Ibid. Historian Linda Kerber dealt with this issue. Kerber argued that while many suffragists relied on this reciprocity as the reason they should be enfranchised, it was easy to argue against this sentiment. Opponents could make the case that “the reciprocal of taxpaying was not suffrage but the enjoyment of the protections government offered.” Kerber also reflected on the other gendered differences in women’s citizenship compared to men’s. For example, in 1917 when women were trying to obtain the vote, they were not being drafted to serve in World War I. Their obligations to the state were less than men’s. Kerber, *No Constitutional Right to be Ladies*, xx-xxi; 113.

²⁶⁹ Abram Simmons to Marie Stuart Edwards, September 18, 1917, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 2, Folder 6, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

be seemingly free to cast ballots.²⁷⁰ However, if the Indiana Supreme Court overturned the Marion County Superior Court decision, Marion County women would have to be registered by October 8 in order to vote, so the court granted women permission to register.²⁷¹ It seemed unlikely that the Supreme Court would issue a decision before that date unless the process was expedited.²⁷² According to the Franchise League's research, justices John Spencer, Moses Lairy, and Lawson Harvey would most likely uphold the law while Richard Erwin would vote against it. David Myer's inclinations were not clear, but the Franchise League doubted he would support the partial suffrage act.²⁷³

Ultimately, two briefs in defense of the partial suffrage act were prepared and submitted to the Indiana Supreme Court. The first brief was a joint effort by a number of prominent lawyers, the majority of whom also served as the representation for the defendant in *Bennett*. Emma Eaton White and Catharine W. McCulloch prepared the second brief.²⁷⁴ White and McCulloch wrote that Knight's motivation was "not that the principle of democracy will suffer by the vote of enfranchised women, but that an infinitesimal portion of the money he pays for taxes will be expended in receiving and counting the votes of the women."²⁷⁵ McCulloch systematically quoted various state constitutions that had extended partial suffrage to women. Kansas, for example, had given women the right to vote in school and municipal elections through legislation in 1861 and 1887 respectively even though the state constitution of Kansas read, "Every

²⁷⁰ "Supreme Court Will Be Asked to Uphold Law," *Indianapolis Star*, September 18, 1917.

²⁷¹ "Registration of Women," *Indianapolis News*, October 1, 1917.

²⁷² "Campaign Issues to be Put Before Women of City," *Indianapolis Times*, October 13, 1917.

²⁷³ Marie Stuart Edwards to Allison Stuart, September 14, 1917, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 2, Folder 6, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

²⁷⁴ "Suffrage Appeal Up Before Court," *Indianapolis Star*, September 25, 1917.

²⁷⁵ Brief of the Appellants at 2, *Bd. Of Election Commr's of City of Indianapolis v. Knight*, 187 Ind. 108, 117 N.E. 565 (Ind. 1917) (No. 23,375).

male person of twenty one years and upward . . . shall be deemed a qualified elector.”²⁷⁶

The wording of their constitution is very similar to the wording of Article II, Section 2 of the Indiana Constitution. Illinois granted women the right to vote in municipal and presidential elections in 1913. Its constitution read, “male citizen of the United States above the age of 21 years shall be entitled to vote.”²⁷⁷ Both Illinois and Kansas’ suffrage laws were challenged in court and the judges found in favor of suffragists.

Judge Erwin’s illness and death on October 4, 1917, delayed the Indiana Supreme Court’s opinion. Suffragists’ research had indicated he was one of the judges who would have decided against the constitutionality of the partial suffrage law.²⁷⁸ During this waiting period, William Thompson, a respected lawyer and member of the Republican party, joined the suffragists’ legal counsel.²⁷⁹ Pro-suffrage women had to remain nonpartisan. A Republican was needed for their legal team because Abram Simmons was a prominent Democrat. There were some rumors that Republican leadership, although claiming to be suffragists, did not want women to vote in the election in November. They believed the law would be upheld, but feared the women’s vote in the municipal elections. Therefore, if the Indiana Supreme Court decision was delayed it would be to the Republicans’ advantage.²⁸⁰

A very different political game was being played in public, however. The *Indianapolis Star*, which leaned Republican, noted that Republicans “made no secret”

²⁷⁶ Ibid. at 23.

²⁷⁷ Ibid. at 25

²⁷⁸ “Indiana Supreme Court Adjourns,” *Indianapolis Times*, October 5, 1917.

²⁷⁹ Marie Stuart Edwards to Abram Simmons, October 1, 1917, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 1, Folder 7, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

²⁸⁰ “Value Work of Women,” *Indianapolis News*, September 18, 1917; “Statement to Women,” *Indianapolis News*, September 18, 1917; Marie Stuart Edwards to Abram Simmons, October 1, 1917, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 1, Folder 7, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis. Edwards simply told Simmons that she heard from a reliable source of lawyers that those were the sentiments of the Republican party.

that women's participation in the election would "confer a distinct advantage" on Charles Jewett.²⁸¹ Jewett, the Republican mayoral candidate, made a careful statement about Judge Rochford's negative decision. Jewett declared that women should not be discouraged and should continue to register. If women did not continue to register, he opined, they might lose the opportunity to vote because registration ended on October 8, and the Supreme Court decision was not likely to be issued by that time.²⁸² He emphasized the conservative nature of women voters in Indiana and declared that he was seeking "motherly, gracious and courageous women who know the problems and the temptations of the young of their sex" to help him clean up Indianapolis. He touted his plan that included not only listening to women voters, but also hiring women as police officers.²⁸³ However, the Democratic leaning *Indianapolis Times* reported that Jewett had a "deliberate purpose to bar Indianapolis women from voting at the coming election."²⁸⁴ In the end, whoever and whatever sought to keep women from voting caused much displeasure among Indianapolis suffragists.

Indianapolis suffragists also used this waiting period to express their annoyance with Judge Rochford's ruling. This was the second time a lower court judge had ruled that women could not vote. Unlike the first case, suffragists knew they could not directly attack the judge as had the Lafayette Franchise League. Members of the Woman's Franchise League of Indiana maintained their decorum and more creatively demonstrated their displeasure with a skit at the Claypool Hotel on September 28, 1917.

²⁸¹ "Suffrage Ruling Upsets All Dope," *Indianapolis Star*, September 19, 1917. The strange title of this article is correct. It is an article concerning how Democrats and Republicans were reacting to the prospect of women voters in the fall election.

²⁸² "Plans to Push Registration Continue," *Indianapolis Star*, September 18, 1917.

²⁸³ "Jewett Voices Cause to Women," *Indianapolis Star*, October 21, 1917.

²⁸⁴ "Jewett and Suffrage," *Indianapolis Times*, September 25, 1917. This article not only attacks Jewett but also the *Indianapolis News* for their bias promoting injustice.

Suffragists performed a cleverly penned melodrama based on the suffrage case. In the play, Lindy Anna (Indiana) tried to win Bill Suffrage's hand in marriage but the villain, Sir Dark (Knight), tried to stop Lindy Anna from getting her man.²⁸⁵ The marriage of Bill Suffrage and Lindy Anna was to take place on November 6, despite the fact that Lindy's aunt, Anti-Suff, opposed the match. Anti-Suff had heard that the other Suffrage boys had married Cally Fornia, Carrie Zona, and other women out west. She heard those marriages ended badly. Aunt Anti-Suff finally persuaded Lindy's father to retract his consent to his daughter's marriage by convincing him that Lindy would "neglect her tatting." Then the villain, Sir Dark, appeared out of nowhere. He seemed to have no vested interest in the matter and yet opposed the match without providing a reason. A distraught and confused Lindy Anna planned to run away with Bill, but Sir Dark thwarted her plan. Sir Dark questioned Bill's "constitution" despite Bill's insistence that "Milly Noise did it; why not Lindy Anna"? During Sir Dark's harassment of Bill, Lindy's father reappears, ends the argument, and allows Lindy and Bill to marry.²⁸⁶

²⁸⁵ "Suffrage Farce Pleases Crowd," *Indianapolis Star*, September 29, 1917.

²⁸⁶ "Suffrage Season Again Opens with Unique Event," *The Hoosier Suffragist*, September 21, 1917, 1-2. The reality did not end quite so well for Lindy Anna Suffrage in October. To clarify, this newsletter was printed before the date of the play and re-told the plot in order to advertise the upcoming tea event.

[Image 1]

Actresses in Costume for Suffrage “Mellow Drama”



(*Indianapolis News*, September 22, 1917)

While this play seemed to have been the most vocal and visual means Indianapolis women used to express their displeasure, it followed the societal expectations of women. Pageants put on by women and children celebrated achievements and holidays. The farcical nature of this play may have offended some of the real people the women mockingly portrayed; however, it was a response to an unfavorable ruling that fit within the confines of how women were taught to behave in society.

The melodrama was not the only forum that women used to express their displeasure. Their newsletter, *The Hoosier Suffragist*, humorously lightened articles

covering the very serious suit that threatened their right to vote from the first edition in August 1917. In that issue, the writers warned “flippant” readers not to make a pun about Mr. Knight’s name. They also remarked, “Mr. Hoover says he expects the women of this country to save enough to pay for the war. Mr. Knight says that ballot boxes and ‘fixings’ for women to vote will cost at least six thousand dollars. If we pay for the war can’t the men scrape up the money for those ballot boxes?”²⁸⁷ The notion that Knight rejected women voters because of tax money irked suffragists.

Women continued to register to vote during this lull in court action, and it was reported that between 30,000 and 41,000 women had registered to vote.²⁸⁸ Given the new audience, registration stations changed with the entrance of women into the political scene. Face powder distributors advertised their products outside the stations and the Chief Clerk of Registration at City Hall reported that “[t]here is a bugaboo about women hesitating to tell their age, but that’s past now . . . and only once in a long while does one of the fair sex register ‘shock’ when the clerks ask.”²⁸⁹ The other notable change was the number of children who were brought to the registration station with their mothers. The *Indianapolis Star* even suggested a registration station resembled a “nursery.”²⁹⁰ Overall, the local papers reported no indication of any harmful encounters at the registration stations.

These kinds of news articles were pivotal to the Hoosier women’s cause as the court cases progressed through the system. The National Woman’s Party picket of the White House, which began on January 10, 1917, and continued throughout this period,

²⁸⁷ “The Woman Citizen” *The Hoosier Suffragist*, August 22, 1917, 2.

²⁸⁸ “117,501 Can Vote in City Election, *Indianapolis Star*, October 23, 1917. The clerk also reported a large number of registered voters hailing from the north side, a typically Republican area of the city.

²⁸⁹ “More than 90,000 Voters Recorded,” *Indianapolis Star*, October 5, 1917.

²⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

garnered more attention in the press as women were arrested and charged with obstructing traffic. The *Indianapolis Star* reported some of the arrests were made in a good-natured fashion, with courtesy and all parties following their socially ordained gender roles; others, however, did not go quite as smoothly.²⁹¹ Carrie Chapman Catt blamed the picketers and the nationwide negative media they were attracting as the reason the suffrage movement did not make much progress in 1917.²⁹² Catt then attempted to persuade anyone who would listen that the National American Woman Suffrage Association represented at least 98 percent of suffragists and the radical actions of some should not ruin the good name of the rest of the movement.²⁹³

A number of suffragists in Indiana also distanced themselves from more radical women. The Woman's Franchise League of Indiana repeatedly denied association with the women picketers. For example, in June the Franchise League released a statement calling the picketers "undignified, unnecessary and disorderly." They concluded that the picketers' methods "in time of war will cause unnecessary trouble for our country."²⁹⁴ While the Woman's Franchise League of Indiana declared their distance, some radical women from Indianapolis did take part in the demonstrations in Washington, D.C.²⁹⁵

Finally, after weeks of debate, the Indiana Supreme Court ruled on October 26, 1917 that the partial suffrage act passed by the General Assembly violated Article II,

²⁹¹ "Courtesy Marks Women's Arrest," *Indianapolis Star*, July 15, 1917; "Sixteen Suffragist Arrested, Taken to Jail," *Indianapolis News*, July 14, 1917; "Arrest Six Suffragists," *Indianapolis News*, August 24, 1917; "Suffragists Get Six-Month Terms," *Indianapolis Times*, October 16, 1917; "Miss Alice Paul Sent to Prison," *Indianapolis Times*, October 22, 1917.

²⁹² Carrie Chapman Catt to Congressional Chairman, September 24, 1917, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 1, Folder 6, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis. Catt was a prominent national suffragist. She made a name for herself in the Western state-by-state movement before becoming the president of NAWSA. Flexner, *Century of Struggle*, 214-217; 265.

²⁹³ Carrie Chapman Catt, "An Open Letter to the Public," July 13, 1917, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 1, Folder 6, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

²⁹⁴ "Not Connected with White House Picketing," *Indianapolis News*, June 30, 1917.

²⁹⁵ Hoosiers Nellie Barnes and Anna Kelton Wiley both participated in the picket. See Jim Lindgren, "Taking the Risk," *Traces of Indiana and Midwestern History* 24 no.3 (Summer 2012): 42-47.

Section 2 of the Indiana Constitution. Chief Justice John W. Spencer wrote the opinion of the court and Justice Lawson M. Harvey penned the only dissent. Even though Article II, Section 2 did not explicitly prohibit the General Assembly from extending the right to vote to women, the majority did not believe the legislature could enfranchise people purposely excluded from the voting clause in the Indiana Constitution. If the Court allowed the partial suffrage measure to stand, foreign-born people with no intention of becoming citizens and men under twenty-one years of age could also be allowed to vote.²⁹⁶ The Court stated that it could be inferred that the framers of the Indiana Constitution did not mean for suffrage to be given to women. The Court wanted to assure women that its decision was not based upon the justices own feelings on suffrage, but was simply a constitutional matter.²⁹⁷ In answer to the argument that the Illinois Constitution was similar to the Indiana Constitution and therefore the bill should be upheld, Spencer wrote, “[t]he bare fact, standing alone, that one officer is named in the Constitution and the other is not, affords only an arbitrary ground for distinction as to who may participate in their election.”²⁹⁸ Spencer then cited the dissenting opinion in the case of the Illinois Suffrage Act and concurred with that justice that the Illinois act was likewise “unsound.”²⁹⁹

The majority admitted that the General Assembly had the authority to extend to women the right to vote in school board elections. However, because that section of the law was not intended to stand alone, the Court could not legislate from the judicial branch. Consequently, since “it is apparent that the legislature would not have passed the

²⁹⁶ *Knight*, 187 Ind. 108, 117 N.E. 565, 567.

²⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 566; see also, “Decision is Opposed by One Judge,” *Indianapolis Star*, October 27, 1917.

²⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 568.

²⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

act, except as a whole, the entire statute must fall.”³⁰⁰ Judge Lairy wrote a concurring opinion and came to the same conclusion as Spencer’s majority opinion through an analysis of the evolution of the Indiana Constitution from 1816 until 1881. He felt that the intentions of the constitutional framers were evident in their actions and that they would not have upheld such a power as giving the General Assembly the power to determine the voter base.³⁰¹

Judge Harvey’s dissenting opinion stressed the principle of local self-government. He believed that the Constitution was constructed as a broad overview and that the framers left details like setting voter qualifications to local governments. It would be inefficient for every change to require an amendment. Harvey presented his theory that the idea of self-government was emphasized more in the 1851 Constitution than it had been in the 1816 Constitution. Additionally, he argued that the Constitution itself delineated two kinds of elections, those mentioned and those not mentioned, in the Constitution. He felt that distinction gave the explicit right to local governments determine who, how, and when such elections were to take place. Lastly, while he thought the entire act should have been declared valid, he also disagreed with his counterparts and stated that if they felt that the school vote was valid, they could have separated that provision from the rest of the law.³⁰²

³⁰⁰ Ibid., 571.

³⁰¹ Ibid., 575. Ironically, Lairy dissented in the *Bennett* case and wrote, “A court may not overthrow an act of the legislature because, in its opinion, such act violates the spirit of our institutions, or impairs rights which it is the object of a free government to protect, or because it encroaches upon the natural rights of citizens.” 186 Ind. 533, 116 N.E. 921, 925.

³⁰² *Knight*, 187 Ind. 108, 117 N.E. 565, 571-575.

Hoosier women tried once more to push through another appeal on Judge Spencer's decision in *Knight* asking for presidential suffrage.³⁰³ The court denied the appeal. In the words of Attorney General Ele Stansbury to Woman's Franchise League of Indiana President Marie Stuart Edwards, "[t]he thing to do now is to cheerfully enter upon a campaign" for an amendment to the current constitution.³⁰⁴ Marie Stuart Edwards remained convinced of the legality of the partial suffrage act. Based upon a response her brother sent to her, Edwards must have hypothesized that the outcome of the case was driven by the feelings of the important political leaders and eminent lawyers. Stuart tried to assure his sister that he did not believe there was a conspiracy, that he, too, "had grave doubts about the validity" of the law.³⁰⁵ However, Edwards still convinced her brother to petition for a rehearing for the presidential suffrage right when none of the lawyers defending the women would do so.³⁰⁶

The Franchise League continued to work for the right to vote even after there was no hope for the partial suffrage act. Virginia Dill McCarty's recent essay on Indiana women's legal history called the *Knight* decision "the last gasp of the conservative movement in Indiana against the women's vote."³⁰⁷ This was not the first time the justices relied upon a strict interpretation of the Constitution; therefore, they did not stray from their general trend toward "hesitant, moderate reform."³⁰⁸ On progressive issues dealing with work, infrastructure, and health, the Court ruled in favor of reform, but it

³⁰³ Petition for Re-Hearing at 10, *Bd. Of Election Commr's of City of Indianapolis v. Knight*, 187 Ind. 108, 117 N.E. 565 (No. 23,375).

³⁰⁴ Ele Stansbury to Marie Stuart Edwards, November 12, 1917 League of Women Voters Papers, Box 1, Folder 7, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

³⁰⁵ Allison Stuart to Marie Stuart Edwards, November 27, 1917, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 1, Folder 7, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

³⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

³⁰⁷ McCarty, "From Petticoat Slavery to Equality," 184.

³⁰⁸ Bodenhamer and Shepard, "The Narratives and Counternarratives of Indiana Legal History," 12.

had to be pushed by a federal constitutional amendment to accept woman's suffrage despite the actions of the suffragists and the legislature.

The outcome of the *Knight* case bitterly disappointed the members of the Woman's Franchise League of Indiana. These members had footed the bill for the expense of the lawyers, for canvassing, and for organizational efforts. In a news release, the Indianapolis branch of the Franchise League stated, "We feel that the women of Indiana are being very unjustly treated at the hands of men voters. The women of this state are being called on for all kinds of war service . . . Our men are so short-sighted and so lacking in patriotism that they are still willing to see us work under this growing disadvantage. This we resent."³⁰⁹ This attack on the anti-suffragists' patriotism was an especially biting retort given the atmosphere of slacker propaganda and war work.³¹⁰ The World War I era is known for its jingoism, and renouncing men's patriotism broke with the women's more conservative responses to many of the other setbacks they had faced.

Newspapers published milder personal reactions by suffrage leaders. Legislative Council President Luella McWhirter stated that women would continue to work until a statute was passed and women obtained the ballot.³¹¹ Marie Stuart Edwards noted that she thought public opinion had demonstrated that the courts would decide in their favor. She was shocked when the court did not, but stated that women would continue to fight to obtain suffrage.³¹² Lastly, active women's club member Grace Julian Clarke declared she was not shocked. She believed that the Indiana Constitution was very different from the Illinois Constitution and it was her belief that "the Supreme Court would have reversed

³⁰⁹ "Ruling Not Surprising to Workers," *Indianapolis Star*, October 27, 1917.

³¹⁰ Capozzola, *Uncle Sam Wants You*, 83-116.

³¹¹ "Ruling Not Surprising to Workers," *Indianapolis Star*, October 27, 1917.

³¹² Ibid.

itself by upholding the Indiana Act,” therefore the judges had no other choice.³¹³ Even though there were differences among the leading suffragists’ reactions, one sentiment rang through—that the women of the state would not give up their fight for equal suffrage.

This sentiment was not always shared with the rank and file members of the Franchise League. In Marie Stuart Edward’s presidential report, she noted that one branch of the League wrote to her after the Indiana Supreme Court’s decision asking for its dues back. That branch felt it was “organized under false pretenses” for they did not actually get the vote, and the law that passed was not constitutionally sound.³¹⁴ While Edwards tried to maintain a hopeful tone and stressed that the court decisions were only a temporary setback, she admitted that it caused “complete and utter demoralization.”³¹⁵ This demoralization would not last long. Soon the movement would be re-energized by rapid progress toward a national amendment that would grant women the right to vote.

³¹³ Ibid.

³¹⁴ Report of the President: Woman’s Franchise League of Indiana 1917-1918, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 2, Folder 2, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

³¹⁵ Ibid.

Conclusion

While the events of 1917 did not culminate in the majority of Hoosier women being able to cast a ballot, progress was made. In the spring of 1917, women were granted suffrage. In June, the Marion County Superior Court decided the partial suffrage law was invalid in Marion County. In July, the Indiana Supreme Court declared women could not vote in the Constitutional Convention election, but Indiana women maintained the rest of their partial voting rights. In September, the Marion County Superior Court denied women's vote. In October, the Indiana Supreme Court affirmed that ruling and declared the Woman Suffrage Act of 1917 unconstitutional. Throughout this brief period, Hoosier women kept true to social expectations about proper women's behavior. Granted, as the year passed the tactics women used to denounce the anti-suffrage forces, such as the melodrama, became slightly more radical. However, women largely kept their composure and suffragists proved that a great number of women did want to vote.

Even with the October 1917 decision, Hoosier suffragists had not admitted defeat. Marie Stuart Edwards convinced her brother, Allison Stuart, to appeal the Indiana Supreme Court decision in order to try and obtain presidential suffrage for women. In February 1918, the court dismissed the appeal. In a letter Stuart penned to Edwards on February 28, 1918, he noted "This, of course, is the end of the story."³¹⁶ While this decision may have been the nail in the coffin of the 1917 suffrage drama, it was by no means the end of the suffrage fight.

In 1919, amid post-World War I negotiations and reparation debates in Europe, Hoosier women once again lobbied the Indiana General Assembly to pass a law granting

³¹⁶ Allison Stuart to Marie Stuart Edwards, February 28, 1918, League of Women Voters Papers, Box 1, Folder 7, Indiana Historical Society, Indianapolis.

women the right to vote in presidential elections. Women had proven they were valuable assets to this nation outside of the home when they stepped up as their men were being shipped overseas to fight in the Great War. At the national level, President Woodrow Wilson publically endorsed woman's suffrage as a war measure.³¹⁷

When a presidential suffrage bill was introduced before the General Assembly in January 1919, the atmosphere was very different than it had been in 1917. The debate over suffrage had already played out. Where there had been numerous letters to the editor decrying suffrage in 1917, editorials now appeared on other, seemingly more contentious, bills.³¹⁸ The *Indianapolis Star* reported that "there is a general desire to push [the] suffrage measure through as promptly as possible and on a nonpartisan basis."³¹⁹ The presidential suffrage bill passed the legislature swiftly and on February 6, 1919, Governor James Goodrich signed into law "an act granting women citizens the right to vote for presidential electors; and providing for their registration" thereby giving Hoosier women the right to vote in presidential elections.³²⁰

While Hoosier women once again obtained some voice in the voting booth, they continued to lobby for full enfranchisement through a federal amendment. Hope for obtaining suffrage through this venue seemed to quickly eclipse Indiana suffragists' disappointments. However, the passage of a federal amendment would not be easy. The proposed Susan B. Anthony Amendment appeared to be making progress in the United

³¹⁷ Woodrow Wilson, "Address to the Senate on the 19th Amendment," September 30, 1918, http://www.public.iastate.edu/~aslagell/SpCm416/Woodrow_Wilson_suff.html (accessed March 1, 2012).

³¹⁸ Debates about legislation concerning watching movies on Sundays dominated the letters to the editor. "One More for Sunday Movies," *Indianapolis Star*, January 24, 1919. "For Sunday Lid on Movies," *Indianapolis Star*, January 24, 1919.

³¹⁹ "Presidential Suffrage Bill Sent to the Senate," *Indianapolis Star*, January 28, 1919.

³²⁰ "An act granting women citizens the right to vote for presidential electors; and providing for their registration," *Laws of the State of Indiana Passed at the Seventy-First regular session of the General Assembly* (Indianapolis: Wm. B. Burford, 1919), p. 5

States House of Representatives in January 1918, but it was defeated in the United States Senate that year. It was reintroduced in 1919, and while margins were consistently close in the Senate, the suffrage amendment passed the House 304 to 89 and then the Senate 56 to 25.³²¹ In order to officially amend the United States Constitution, however, thirty-six states needed to ratify the amendment.

Three midwestern states—Illinois, Michigan, and Wisconsin—rushed to be the first to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment. Indiana ratified the amendment in a special session on January 16, 1920.³²² The text of the Nineteenth Amendment reads: “The right of citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of sex. Congress shall have power to enforce this article by appropriate legislation.”³²³ This phrase voided the word “male” as had been found in Article II, Section 2 of the Indiana Constitution thereby giving Hoosier women the right to vote. It took about a year for enough states to ratify the amendment and on August 18, 1920, Tennessee became number thirty-six.

The suffrage movement is generally described as a seventy-two-year effort. Indiana women’s rights activists held their first convention in 1851 and addressed the state’s legislature in 1859 to ask for women’s enfranchisement. These early women asked for the right to vote on the basis of women’s equality with men.³²⁴ By the turn of the twentieth century, equality was no longer the foundation of most suffragists’ arguments. Hoosier women wanted the vote to improve the state they lived in. They wanted the vote

³²¹ “Suffrage Wins in Senate; Now Goes to States,” *New York Times*, June 5, 1919. Indiana Senators James Watson and Harry New voted for suffrage.

³²² “Enrolled Joint Resolution,” *Laws of the State of Indiana Passed at the Special Session of the General Assembly Begun on the Sixteenth Day of January A.D. 1920*, (Fort Wayne, IN: Fort Wayne Printing Company, 1920), p. 5.

³²³ U.S. Constitution, amend. 19.

³²⁴ Scholten, “A Public ‘Jollification’: The 1859 Women’s Rights Petition before the Indiana Legislature,” 347-359.

because women supposedly possessed qualities that men lacked. Hoosier suffragists believed that with women's entrance into the political realm social tensions would be relieved, government practices would be less corrupt, and children would be raised to be better citizens. These feats proved to be impossible to bring to fruition, and nearly one-hundred years later women are still under represented in the United States government.

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